































"THE COTTAGE IN THE WOOD"



# A BIT O' SILENCE

BY

HELEN HILL McWILLIAMS

Illustrated from Photographs

By

FREDERICK S. FRANKLIN

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HELEN HILL McWILLIAMS

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*To Virginia, Billy and Betsey Jane,  
To Anne, Roberta and Esther Lane,  
To Patty, Shirley and Gilbertine,  
To Sylvia, Rosamond, Sally and Jean,  
To Kate and Rachel and Copper, dear,  
And all the animals that appear—  
To Elizabeth, Frances, so on and so forth,  
Likewise our friends in the frozen North—  
(I'm certainly having an awful time  
Trying to squeeze all of you into this rhyme)—  
To Nancy, to Philip and to Roxane,  
To Garry, Dickie and each dear man  
Who's a part of the tale that I here relate,  
This book I lovingly dedicate.*

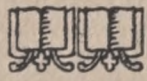
H. H. McW.



*“When the song’s gone out o’ your  
life, you can’t start another while its  
a ringin’ in your ears, ’tis best to  
have a bit o’ silence, and out o’ that,  
maybe, a psalm will come bye and  
bye.”*



# A Bit o' Silence



BUFFALO, March 30, 191 .

VIRGINIA, DARLING, :

Of course they won't let you read this yourself but Billy can read it to you and I must write *now*—this very minute, my heart is so full. To think that you are a mother and have a weeny baby of your own! And I am an aunt! Of course I've been a mother for many moons myself but I've never been an aunt before and it has gone to my head I guess. I simply can't express my feelings in words at all so I won't try—I just want to tell you that I love you more this minute than I ever did before and that I am thinking of you with a heart full of love and devotion and thankfulness. O, Virginia, dear, do enjoy every minute of your lamb while she is tiny for she'll grow so big in such a little while and you can't ever make her be a baby again you know. I never could understand people wanting their babies to hurry and grow up for there is nothing in their later life to quite equal their helpless, soft, rose-bud baby-hood, so make the most of it and enjoy it while you may.

I was sitting on a pile of rugs about half an hour ago, trying to decide what to do next when I saw the messenger boy dash up the steps with the telegram and my heart almost stopped beating until I knew that all was well. Precious little Betsey Jane—hug and kiss her for me and for Garry and the children and congratulate Billy for us all.

There's the telephone—it was Garry, and he said to tell Billy he gives him the glad mitt and may all his troubles be little ones. Garry is such an idiot and couldn't understand why I was weeping into the receiver. Aren't men queer? They'll never know, will they, dear?

Well, we are all packed and ready to start on our pilgrimage and we have to arise and shine at the unholy hour of five tomorrow morning in order to get out there in any kind of time. Now that we are really going, I wonder



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*why* we are going, but something seemed to tell me that it was the thing to do—to leave the city where we were both born and have always lived and where our children were born, and migrate to the country; it was the “call of the wild,” I guess, and I’ve always had it to a great extent—I’m so tired of paved streets and little back yards and trolley cars clanging and I want the green fields and country roads and wild flowers and woods and birds and a little garden to putter around in and I’m going to have them, too. Yes, we’ve “gone and done it” and tomorrow we join the great army of commuters and begin a new kind of life. Garry simply howls and says that anyone would think we were going into the Great Silence instead of a nearby town, and he’s right, for we will be only an hour from the city and can get to our old friends and they to us very easily. And, really, since you married and went way down east and Mother and Dad have elected to stay in the frozen North, Buffalo does not seem the same and when all is said and done, I have very few regrets and am looking forward to a most interesting and happy time in our new home. The Brinkerhoffs and the Buells are the only people we know in Stormfield but we’ll make new friends, of course, and too, the Vales are coming. I must now go and telephone all the girls that Betsey Jane has come to town so will bring this disjointed epistle to a close—it will be my last letter from here. God bless you and the baby, Virginia, dear, and may your little daughter be a joy and a blessing to you always—how I would love to see her this minute! The children want to leave for Boston tonight. I cannot help wondering what the next few years have in store for us.

STORMFIELD, April 4.

Having so much to do that I don’t know where to begin, I have decided to let everything go for the time being and reel off a few lines to the Bostonians. Bill will have to read my letters to you for a while, of course, so I’ll carefully refrain from exposing any family skeletons or letting any of the various cats out of the bag in regard to your dyed hair, false teeth or glass eye, and so forth.

We arrived safely but in a blinding snow storm, coming on the noon train. The loads didn’t get here until three but the vans were covered so all was well. I found the women I had engaged cleaning madly and the house warm



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and fresh but very homely, as I told you it was. My dear, such hideous wall paper I have never seen, but Mr. Dieffenbach, our millionaire landlord, is going to have some papering done immediately; he's positively rolling in wealth, lights his cigars with ten dollar bills and all that sort of thing. I confess I felt a few qualms of home-sickness as I gazed around the neighborhood—it looks so cold and barren—nothing in the line of foliage being out yet of course. I'll be mighty glad when the Vales get here—you know that Amy and Ned have taken the house next door and will be out in about two weeks. I prepared a large and copious meal for the moving men and sent them on their homeward way rejoicing. Garry started in immediately and put rugs down and placed some of the furniture around (in various attitudes of stiffness as men always do) and I lighted our big brass student lamp as soon as it grew dark and in a short time we looked most homelike. Then Sally Brinkerhoff ran in to ask me to lunch with her the next day and to say that she would adore taking Nancy and Phil for all day so that I could get settled more easily and quickly. I considered it most thoughtful of her and accepted with alacrity. She is not quite so pretty as she was in her high-school days but is very sweet-looking and has wonderful eyes and no other feature counts much anyway. I haven't met any of the natives yet but there seems to be an abundance of the same. Garry has started to commute and thinks he will enjoy it greatly. We have a fine deep lot (280 feet, I believe), a huge veranda and big front lawn; the house is absolutely hopeless on the outside but I can see a few possibilities on the inside. Garry says that I must be gifted with second sight but I really think I can do something with it. However, our house and the Vales' were the only vacant abodes in Stormfield so it was Hobson's choice.

The bedrooms are large and there's a fine attic and dandy laundry and furnace and natural gas and all those prosaic things that make life worth living and when one thinks of the ridiculously low rent we are paying, we can't complain. I think I'll name our mansion "Homely Hut" and have my stationery engraved accordingly. It started to snow this afternoon and I heard Phil asking Nancy if she knew what snow was made of and she replied, "Why, it isn't *made* of anything, Bruddie, it's the rain all popped out." Pretty cunning of her, I thought. You can't feaze Nancy you know,



she has an answer for everything. I predict a brilliant future for my child.

O, dear, I do wish it would stop snowing—here it is April and the crocuses are already beginning to put their little heads up out of the ground, and still it snows.

April 12.

A wonderful day! Clear and sharp with a little twinge in the air and yet every now and then a soft, balmy breath of wind that seems to whisper "Summer is coming—summer is coming—soon." Summer with its bright, sunny days—it's strawberries and linen dresses—and no hats and bathing suits and moon-light strolls and a thousand other wonderful things—O—how I adore it!

Billy's letter with the snap-shot of the weeny one, taken in the nurse's arms, just came; the pet lamb that she is! For a four-day-old baby, your child is most handsome and intelligent-looking only I wish she hadn't elected to keep her left eye shut. Billy tells me that she has red hair and I'm fairly consumed with jealousy; I have always wanted a red-haired child you know and mine are perfect tow-heads, like Garry used to be; they're exactly like him in every way for that matter and I might as well be their governess for all the resemblance they bear to me. However I ought to be thankful for small favors, I suppose. The children have made countless friends already—Nancy's boon companion being Jessamine Jones—an only daughter and a very spoiled one—and Phil's idea of masculine perfection being one Homer Leaks (pretty name, methinks), who is a devil of the first water. I can see it in his eye. T. R. would present this town with a gold medal I am sure did he know how prolific it is—no race suicide here; there are children to right of us—children to left of us—children in front of us—*almost* six hundred.

I have had one caller and I fell in love with her at once. She is Mrs. Richard Tennant—who was Anne Remington before she was married and is well known in literary circles in the city. Of course, I had often heard of her and so have you; you know she writes for the Record in town and has lots of things published and is exceedingly clever and most unconventional. She didn't call in the ordinary way at all, thanks be, but came to the back door with a large bunch of rhubarb out of her garden and said she



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hoped we liked the stuff and that there was lots more where that came from and she would be over again soon and to call upon her for anything we needed or wanted to know and to come over any old time and make ourselves very much at home. She is delightful and has a most expressive face and big soulful eyes and wavy chestnut hair which was twisted up under a delapidated old felt hat. The rest of her costume consisted of a torn and spotted skirt, a man's blue flannel shirt, turned in at the neck, and the holiest shoes I ever saw. I know I'll adore her. She lives just around the corner and there's a path connecting our backyards. I'm dying to see her house for I know it will be as attractive as she is. Ned Vale was out for a short time today and is wild to get out here to stay. He expects to come out next week with the furniture and Amy will come soon after. We aren't any more settled as yet down stairs because the new paper is to be put on Thursday so what's the use of putting up pictures and curtains and dragging them all down again. The children are sleeping peacefully and all is quiet on the Potomac.

I went down to the Post Office today (it does seem so funny to have to go for one's mail) and walked home behind Virginia Tennant—the eldest of the four Tennant offspring. She is a most artistic-looking girl but impresses me as being terribly dignified and cold and I wonder if I'll ever know her well—'I hae me doots'—though most girls adore me and confide in me and tell me all their troubles, but then, everybody does that. Nancy said today that she wished she had the "kind of looking mother" that Jessamine Jones had as I looked so much like a young girl she hated to tell people that I was her mother! Verily, out of the mouths of babes, and so forth. Would that you might see Mrs. Jones!

April 20.

There have been movings since the world began—since the historic command to "take up thy bed and walk," and there will be movings until the final signal to pass on to the Great Unknown, but of all the movings, journeyings or migrations ever recorded, the Vales' entrance into this burg last night has them all "skinned to a finish." I can picture you now lifting your hands in holy horror at my terrible expressions but dear, while I know that slang is my besetting sin, it is so pat and fits in so beautifully at times



that I can't refrain from using it, and why be stilted when writing to you—you wouldn't like my letters if I were, now would you, dear? Talk about the landing of the Pilgrims—it wasn't a circumstance to this performance—it was unique to say the least. I won't attempt to do it justice but will chronicle it as it really occurred. Ned came in to supper with Garry, having come on the six o'clock train. I greeted him with much surprise as I had been watching for their furniture all day and couldn't understand why Ned was here if the loads weren't coming. He informed me that they were on the way—likewise Mrs. Droudt, the old German woman who has worked for Amy's mother for years—and that all were due at any time and would I ask him to dinner. I assured him that I would like nothing better than to share with him our frugal meal and all went merry as a marriage-bell.

Mrs. Droudt appeared about nine having wandered aimlessly about for hours trying to find the house; it seems that Ned's directions were about as clear as the Mississippi River on a windy day, but she was here, anyway, and we spent the evening in 'conversatione'—I vainly trying to understand her broken English. She looked incredulous when I happened to mention that we took three quarts of milk a day and asked if the children still drank it. I replied that they certainly did to a great extent and she said that they would not grow strong unless they ate everything and informed me that her daughter's child—aged eight months—was entirely unrestricted as regards menu; "Fy," she said, her voice swelling with pride, "our Schoony, he eedz sauerkraut like a great beeg man und helpz heemself to peakles ven he first sits down." I left the room hastily, ostensibly to see to something in the kitchen and had hysterics when I got there. Nancy and Phil are perfect Samsons but I shall certainly add sauerkraut and pickles to their diet list immediately.

At ten no vans had arrived—nor at eleven either, so when midnight struck, I meekly suggested bed. Ned was absolutely disgusted at the turn affairs had taken and after peering out of the window and finding it as dark as Egypt, and no sound disturbing the stillness of the neighborhood, acquiesced.

About two, I was awakened by shouts and noises that would wake the dead and upon investigation, I discovered two loaded moving-vans in front of the Vales' house and



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several men on the veranda ringing their door-bell for all they were worth. I awakened Garry and by dint of much pounding we aroused Ned from the lethargy into which he had fallen and the two dressed and went out, cursing and blaspheming under their breath, the while. I got giggling, of course, and that made them madder. Poor old Mrs. Droudt slept peacefully on and I lay laughing in my four-poster until it fairly shook—while Ned, Garry and three very intoxicated men hauled and dragged furniture, boxes and barrels from the wagons into the house from two-thirty A. M. until break of dawn. There was no moon and they had a beautiful time. The piano is a sight and most of the furniture scratched and marred; the men had apparently stopped at every road-house on the way from the city, supremely indifferent as to what time of day or night they arrived at their destination. Ned will have a fine repair bill to pay, I'm afraid. Garry had to go in this morning, of course, so Ned, Mrs. Droudt and I spent most of the day unpacking and the way things were done up was a caution. It seems that Amy, not feeling well, had left most of it to Mrs. Droudt who did her best and, of course, Angels can do no more. We found priceless old china and rare pottery rattling loosely in large boxes while Ned's shoe-trees carefully wrapped in tissue-paper, reposed in a basket, surrounded by an eider-down comforter. There were many instances of like nature but, as luck would have it, very few things were broken. I have just come from there and at the present writing, Ned is still in the bath-room where he has been for hours, putting up a shower-bath and elaborate nickle arrangements while Mrs. Droudt is shouting vainly for him to come and remove the wash-boiler from the mantle-piece and the wringer from the piano, her strength having deserted her long since. However, 'all's well that ends well' and they're really here. Ned's mother and Garry's mother are cousins you know and so we feel quite close to each other.

Some female imposters appear to be coming in so I must run down and greet them politely.

April 29.

Sunday was a lovely day and we all walked to Rush-ton Pond, a beautiful spot not far from here but rather difficult to get to. The walk along the old Indian trail was delightful and coming home through the woods we met



such an attractive-looking woman, walking slowly along with a big Irish setter. She heard Nancy calling Phil as we passed her, and she looked at him as though she would like to hug him and her eyes filled with tears. She made a distinct impression on me and I must find out who she is and where she lives. Something in me responded immediately to that queer look in her eyes and I've thought about her ever since. I couldn't tell you a thing she had on except some sort of sweater—I don't even know the color. When she was nearly out of sight I heard her calling her dog and *such* a voice—deep and rich, very much like Mother Van's; and, by the way, my adorable mother-in-law has announced her engagement to Mr. Horton and the wedding is to be in June. We are all so glad for certainly if anyone ever deserved happiness she does and I hope she gets more than her share. Garry says it makes him feel wierd to see his mother "sporting" an engagement ring but is very proud of his beautiful parent, nevertheless.

Sally asked me to walk over to her dressmaker's with her last evening and I consented and thereby hangs a tale! Would that one had, too—sky-high! We started bravely forth but felt rather weary as we approached our destination for it was way across the town and the night was densely black and as our lagging foot-steps propelled us a little nearer to the place where the house ought to be, various strange and wierd noises penetrated the atmosphere and with an ominous sound of fierce growls and the rattle of clanking chains the largest dog that ever lived (or so we thought) made for us at break-neck speed. We shrieked—we howled—we ran and fell pell-mell into some furrows in a nearby field—dog meanwhile coming nearer every second. We were nearly suffocated with fear thinking that of course the animal had become unfastened but after what seemed hours of dread suspense the creature clanked back to his original post and it developed that the chain was about a quarter of a mile in length. Sally says that if her dress remains where it is until moth and rust corrupt it, she'll never go near the place again and I fervently echo her statement, adding that I'll never go out again at night, unprotected, in this spooky town as long as I live here.

Our papering is done and I have finished putting things in place and the effect is most pleasing to the eye. I'm rather tired of green but couldn't give it up, so have a soft



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woody two-toned green for the living-room and hall and a love of a blue dining-room. I selected a little English brocade that is so pretty, and that cost much more than Mr. D. intended to pay; Garry says he certainly needs a guardian, he's so easy. I have my beautiful craftsman bookcase along the west wall in the living-room and nothing on it but my Winged Victory (the Carrara marble looks so lovely against the dark back-ground) and a low flat bowl of Greube pottery, an object that I have acquired since you last visited me. I couldn't afford it, I know, but I saw it in a Crafts Shop and fell before its irresistible charm. I'm very sensitive to surroundings, you know, and simply must have things about me that appeal to me and am willing to sacrifice in other ways to have it so. It's incomprehensible to me how people who don't have to, can go through life without one beautiful thing about them; they have only the barest necessities and then do the miser act with the surplus. How much fuller would their lives be did they profit by Mahomet's counsel—"If a man find himself with bread in both hands, he should exchange one loaf for some flowers of the Narcissus, since the loaf feeds the body indeed, but the flowers feed the soul."

Anne Tennant (she has asked me to call her 'Anne,' as she has a perfect horror of last names with Mrs. prefixed) ran over Sunday and asked Amy and me to come to a little tea at her house yesterday. "Bring your knitting, girls," she said, "and come early to avoid the rush—every one is dying to meet you both and they'll all be there with their children and their sisters and their cousins and their aunts in honor of the occasion." We went and enjoyed every minute of it—the house has so much individuality and charm, Anne is a most gracious hostess, and we met slews of fascinating people who say they are coming to call informally and who made us feel so much at home. A Mrs. Watson—a charming widow—is unusually bright and clever and very lovely to look upon. She lives in Buttercup Cottage, a darling house on the corner of our street. She introduced a tall, dark daughter named Gilbertine, nice looking and with beautiful hands, who is home from some domestic science school for Easter. Everybody calls everybody else by their first name and they all seem like one big family. Anne served delicious tea and little buns and cakes and we all sat around everywhere while the fire threw out big cheery



sparks and the air was filled with incense which was wafted from an old incense-burner which stood on a table in the library—it is a quaint, artistic thing and was looted from an Egyptian temple centuries ago. The dining room is most attractive—deep French windows forming the whole back of it and making a perfect setting for the wonderful Concord Hills which loom up in the distance—a mass of deepest purple. There are Windsor chairs and an octagon table which is *not* in the center of the room. A Mrs. Bob Thornton impressed me most favorably. I had always wondered just what was meant by people being described as “breezy,” but Rosamond Thornton fits the appellation to a T—fresh and bright and vivacious—yes, breezy is the word. She came in flushed and rather late and sank exhausted on to the window-seat.

“Anne, dear,” she panted, “I’m so sorry not to have come earlier but your Remington came in a while ago and informed me that the men who are paving James Avenue were *mad* at Sally Anne, so I dashed to the scene of action and found my daughter stuck securely in a mixture of concrete and tar. I will leave the rest to your vivid imagination.”

“Sally Anne is just three,” she explained to Amy and me, “and is of a very inquisitive turn of mind.”

I took an instant liking to a Mrs. Lane, whom they call Roberta, who lives at Fenway Farm, a beautiful Craftsman house back in the woods and a quarter of a mile in from the road; a most perfect example of it’s kind, they say. Mrs. Lane is the mother of three youngsters and everyone else out here seems to be the mother of many, and all seem so proud of it—I never saw anything like it.

“I keep urging all my famly to eat much food,” said the sprightly Mrs. Watson, “for then I won’t have to feed them when we get home. And this is such decent food, too, Anne; what kind neighbor furnished this outlay?” she added.

“Hush, Kate, keep it dark,” said Anne, “don’t give away all our schemes to these lovely new people from town—I am ashamed of your perfidy.”

“It tastes like more, anyway,” continued Kate,—“Gilbertine, you and Felice eat lots and fortify yourselves, for an empty larder awaits you.”





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"How many children have you, Mrs. Watson?" I asked, politely.

"Only three that I can claim as mine," she answered, "but I'm the mother of nations, you know; Jean lives with me and I always have a houseful. And my name is Kate," she added, "and please don't ever call me anything else, for of course I shall call you Nancy and I couldn't ever call that good-looking husband of yours anything but Garry—that's his name, isn't it? I thought so, well, I want you and Garry to dine with us tomorrow night—now be sure."

And that's the way it goes—they're all perfectly dear to us all the time. I must stop now and go and dig out my hut—it looks as though it had been struck by lightning. I am glad that all is so well and that my adorable red-haired niece is thriving.

May 14.

Your letter came yesterday and it is so lovely to hear from you again for with all due respect to my lamb of a brother-in-law, his letters are so unsatisfactory.

And so you like the Titian beauty and are not going to give her away—how strange! You're not in the same class with Kathleen Lawton's laundress, who, when informed that her mistress had twin boys, remarked hopefully, "Oh, well, perhaps one of them will die." Poor thing, I presume she belonged to the large mass of humanity who cannot understand anyone's really *wanting* a baby, to say nothing of two. And do you remember how Gertrude's old uncle from Kansas City gazed thoughtfully at her puny twin and her fat twin and inquired anxiously, "Are they going to keep the little one?" I know that your daughter is the most beautiful baby ever born, save two, and I say unhesitatingly that she is, without a doubt, the most beautiful red-haired baby that ever *did* come into the world; do have her picture taken soon. Mother has always lectured me unmercifully for squandering so much money on photographs of Nancy and Phil but, my dear, I wouldn't take a thousand dollars for any of their pictures if I knew that I couldn't get any more. They were such beautiful babies and those exquisite London heads and cunning groups will help them over many a homely year of long-leggedness, toothlessness and general awkwardness that all the poor little kiddies have to go through with.



While I think of it I must tell you about the beauty who was at Anne's the other day. Jean Carson—a teacher of Chemistry at the High School here and who lives at Kate Watson's. She is as near perfection as any human being I ever saw and just the style you love; tall, fair-haired, blue-eyed, and with exquisitely molded features and a figure that would make Venus blush for shame. A veritable daughter of the gods and as bright and clever as she is beautiful, and a great favorite. I have always maintained that there are two sides to everything and that everyone has a right to his own opinion on any subject but this is the exception that makes the rule for there could positively be no two opinions about Jean—she's physical perfection personified. When the townspeople heard of the handsome Chemistry teacher who had been engaged, an old fogie tottered up to Dick Tennant, Anne's husband, and inquired, "But does she know anything?" "She doesn't have to," promptly responded Dick, who had already seen her.

I find we're in a perfect nest of Christian Scientists, New Thoughtists and students of Metaphysics and I'm glad of it, for I am so interested in all those subjects and am so anxious to have some real insight into them. I've been groping blindly in the dark ever since I first began to look into it and I know no more now than when I first started, and really less, I believe. I shall keep my eyes and ears open and try to absorb all I possibly can, for these people practice their religion—not merely preach it.

The Concord Hills are a wonderful sight today; deepest purple with pale green lights every now and then appearing in little glints through the darker shades—they look near enough to touch but are many miles away, I believe. Isn't it queer that we never came out here before when we have lived so near it always. Garry and I did come out once a few years ago to that party of the Buells but we went back early the next morning and the town looked anything but attractive to my sleepy eyes. You said you remembered driving out here once or twice with Dad when we were little but I have no recollection of it.

Dr. and Mrs. Lane, who live on James Avenue at the corner of our tiny street are very interesting; the doctor is a quiet but brilliant man and a brother of the Fenway Farm Lane, and Esther appealed to me the minute I saw her. She has a dry humor that is killing and she's the kind that wears



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well, I know. They have one small daughter, Constance, not quite four, who greatly desires a more Rooseveltian family, and she said such a cunning thing when I was there the other day. She was looking out of the window when the little Adams twins passed with their nurse and turning to her mother she said, in a most plaintive tone, "Mother,—Mary and Alice is two little girls; I wish *I* was two little girls."

May 24.

Such an interesting experience as we had yesterday! I am sure there is a tragedy of some sort connected with it.

Natalie Barton and Élise came out from town on the noon train to spend the night and to size up my abode in the wilderness; and as both are going away for the summer, Élise to Cape Cod and Natalie to the Berkshires, they insisted upon a walk in the enticing looking woods so with Nancy and baby Phil in tow we started bravely forth. The first part of the walk was awful for the girls wanted to cut across ploughed fields and go down by the old mill and cross the bridge, Natalie saying that it would be more romantic than going by the road. Well, romantic was the word, and then some, for the ruts were awful and dragging two small children up hill and down dale is no joke, believe me. You will find out for yourself when the beloved Betsey Jane arrives at the dragging age. After we had tramped for about three quarters of a mile on the other side of the creek we came to a thick clump of trees in the center of which was a small hut or shack with the cunningest baby pond to the west of it and a weeny latticed veranda in front. Over the door was nailed a board on which was carved in quaint Egyptian characters—"Eat of the Lotus, all ye who enter here." The sight of a house was enough for Phil who insisted upon having a drink of water as he does every five minutes of his existence. He's a close second to Rosamond Thornton who consumes more glasses of water a day than any human creature I ever heard of.

We could hear someone singing and playing an accompaniment inside so I decided to humor my child and was about to go up to the door and knock when it was opened as if by magic and a middle-aged woman appeared and threw out some crumbs to the birds. Phil grasped the opportunity and requested a "dink of wattey." Middle-aged woman went into house and reappeared in a minute with a glass of water



which she presented to child who gulped it down madly and thanked her prettily. I meanwhile made use of the chance to observe that woman at piano was the same one we had met in the woods Easter Sunday, and that she was singing, "If I Had a Thousand Lives to Live," in a glorious contralto voice. She didn't look around, however, or even stop singing, so I didn't gain much by my rude staring after all. We girls are awfully excited about her and talked of nothing else all the way home. We are conjecturing wildly as to what it all means and even the staid Garret has evinced a tiny bit of interest in the subject. If he lives with me long enough he'll gradually acquire quite a number of human characteristics, I really believe. That woman draws me to her as if by an invisible cord and I am going up there to call before long and try my luck—she may shut the door in my face but I'll risk it. I wouldn't intrude into anyone's privacy for the world but I have "one of my premonitions" that she needs a few kindred souls about her and no matter what she is doing up there it won't hurt her to have a friend or two. The girls went back on the noon train today and I have promised to keep them posted as regards the lady of the forest. While they were here Élise, as usual, talked mostly of clothes but I would too if I had such stunning things as she has; she's positively the most stylish creature I ever looked upon and is always fashionable, too, and there is quite a difference between the two, if you'll think about it. I want Nancy to be pretty, of course, when she grows up, though even if she isn't but has lots of charm and style, I'll be satisfied.

P. S. No, I didn't mind the little lecture in your letter and I truly will try to use less slang and to be "more careful in my choice of words," but I'll make no promises.

June 3.

Every single day I thank my lucky stars that I'm here and I wonder whatever put the idea of coming into my head. But how silly to waste thought on the subject; we were meant to come, of course, and it is all part of the program. For one who professes to be a fatalist, I waste a great deal of precious time wondering why certain things happen, when they were meant to happen without a doubt. I know I exaggerate frequently and that my hyperbole effects are terrible at times, but that is due to my impulsive



## A BIT O' SILENCE

and enthusiastic nature, and you know Aunt Judith says that I appeal to her so strongly simply because I *am* ardent. You are now wondering what all this has to do with the price of cheese, but it is simply leading up to the statement that I am not stretching things one bit when I say that the people out here are the most delightful, original, unique, clever and altogether charming human beings that it has ever been my good fortune to be thrown in with. They say and do everything in such an absolutely natural way and are quite without pose or affectation. Of course, there's the usual amount of gossip that there always is in a small town, possibly a little more than the average, but one naturally expects that in such a place. And did you ever notice that the average village gossips are usually perfectly safe as regards any slurring or suggestive remarks being cast in their direction. There is no smoke without a little fire, you know, and the blaze in most cases exists in the fact that the objects of slander are usually so much more attractive than the ones who malign them, that the igniting spark is applied by the green torch of jealousy. I shall probably hear something awfully exciting about myself one of these days and I certainly hope so. How terrible it would seem to be so uninteresting as never to cause the least flutter in one's world. O, spare me that, I pray. The old residents call us the "Colony" and the "Stranded Aristocracy" and various other appellations of like nature, and, of course, that's their privilege. I say "us" because these dear people have welcomed Garry and me into their circle so graciously and beautifully that we already feel like part of the big family. We are in the bridge club and the walking club and have been asked to join everything.

The "Colony" is composed mainly of city people who have come out here to rusticate for a time and who have succumbed to the irresistible charm of the place and stayed on indefinitely. And I will say in justice to some of the old residents that they are very nice and kind-hearted in most ways and fairly broad in their conception of life and I presume some of the goings-on down at our end of town do cause them to raise their eyebrows occasionally, for the reason that their lives move along in the same stilted ruts that those of their ancestors did before them and they cannot conceive of anyone's being broad enough to have a mind of his own. For instance, when Rosamond Thornton was



"down home" for a week not long ago, Bob, her husband, took Mrs. Watson to one of the club dances—and why not? Rosamond and Kate being dearest friends. But the others can't see it that way and the tongues wag merrily. I myself thoroughly approve of it all and think I never saw such friendliness and neighborliness before; the men are so dear and kind and thoughtful to all the women and particularly to the one who happens to be without an escort. It's the 'Universal Brotherhood of Man' exemplified in a most beautiful way. And if one of us is ill or tired, many willing hands are stretched out to do the countless little things that make up the day's work. Why, when I had tonsillitis last week (that's why I didn't write) and was in bed and servantless and worn to a frazzle, Anne Tennant brought my lunch in every day daintily arranged on a brass tray with a fresh posy lying on the spotless napkin, Esther Lane dashed in two nights and cooked the dinner and little Cary Felice Watson ran up in the evening and washed the dishes and arranged the things for breakfast. I never saw anything like it before; it seems to be in the air and people who were hard and cold and selfish before they came here are transformed into loving friendliness the minute they reach the place.

Anne asked me to go into the theatre with her next Saturday, having two dandy seats. I can't possibly go as Gertrude is coming out with the twinnies so suggested sending Garry in my place. Both he and she are delighted but I may have reckoned without my host and numerous anonymous epistles may assail me later warning me of my husband's perfidy. O, well, tongues may wag and cats may mew but I'll do as I jolly please with my own possessions and, like the peasant, I can say of Garry—"A poor thing, but mine own." No, I don't mean that for a minute. He's perfectly adorable and I never have been able to understand just why I happened to appeal. Truly—it's a strange world.

June 6.

The natives have called on me in droves and are so nice, some of them having minds of their own and being quite human. There's a Mrs. Larrabee who is a perfect scream and to whom house-keeping and all that pertains thereto is the one topic of conversation. 'All the world's' her house to Mrs. L., but she has a few grains of humor and goes about in the 'colony' quite a bit. Most of the natives are awfully



## A BIT O' SILENCE

interested in church work and I do like to see it. All the churches are thriving except our poor little Episcopal affair, seven being the average number who attend, and that's the solemn truth. Martin Brinkerhoff, Sally's husband, plays the organ and the choir is composed of any of the congregation who signify their willingness to get up there and sing, in vestments though, of course. Martin plays beautifully and looks like a dream in the organ loft; he certainly is good-looking. Marcia Norrington says he is a perfect Apollo and the handsomest man in Stormfield without a doubt; I don't agree with her, of course, for I know that Garry is, he is so aristocratic looking and his mouth is without a rival for absolute adorableness—it expresses pathos and determination and courage and human weakness all blended together and molded into his dear face.

It seems that one reason for the pitifully small congregation is the fact that the present minister is not very popular and they are all anxious to get rid of him, but he is a mere boy and cannot be expected to expound à la Henry Ward Beecher. I dragged Garry, protesting at every step, to our little church Easter Sunday morning and he swears that he will never go again and I don't much blame him as there were just a handful there. However, I presume that we are just as much at fault as any of the others when it comes to lack of enthusiasm in the church work; with us all it is invariably, "What can I get out of it?" instead of "What can I put into it?" and we remain dormant waiting for things to be made pleasant and alluring for us instead of bustling round in an endeavor to make the church life and work a little more interesting to some of the others.

Our garden is a sight to fill one with joy, our lawn is beautiful and the hut itself is certainly cunning inside. Esther Lane calls it the 'House of a Thousand Candles' and, do you know, my passion for candlesticks has not abated one whit—I have thirty-seven now, fifteen pairs and seven single ones, and all contributions in that line will be gratefully received.

Amy and Ned have gone into town to stay with Amy's mother for a time; we shall miss them but will probably see Ned often, as lawn and garden will need attention. Speaking of lawns and gardens reminds me that I have neglected to mention the Hastings or their house, the former being two of the most hospitable people I have ever known (and



having two adorable children just the ages of Nancy and Philip) and the latter being a thing of beauty and a joy forever—a low, broad white tile structure with spacious verandas, overhanging eaves, flower bordered brick walls and many other charming features, the delightful whole being set carelessly down in the middle of an apple orchard and looking as if it grew there, so harmonious is the blending of the perfect architectural lines, the riot of garden color and the twisted, blossomy trees. Roxane has put the tennis court at our disposal and I venture to say that the booking of Garry's Saturday afternoons and Sundays for the following season would not be a difficult task.

Nancy and Philip are playing at the side of the house, swishing their little bare feet in the soft, ribbony grass—how I envy them! I will wait until it is dark tonight and go and do likewise. Isn't it strange, Jinny dear, that more people do not stop their mad search for happiness, rushing hither and thither, and look nearer home? To my mind the mere joy of living is such an inestimable privilege that great serenity should come with the realization of it—and then the wonderful beauties that may be had for the asking! One evening not long ago, when things had gone topsy turvy all day and I had walked several hot, dusty miles to see my laundress' new grandchild, I found myself in such a disagreeable mood that I called a sharp halt and began to enumerate the things that I had seen and heard that day that were really beautiful. I was so amazed at the way they mounted up that I made them into a little rhyme which I will copy here for you. And remember, Virginia, that these are but an hundredth part of the wonders of one little commonplace day;

#### COMMON THINGS.

Rose petals, opened for a brown bee's sips,  
An apple tree, with tinted blossoms bowed;  
The fragrance from a drowsy baby's lips,  
The beaten, frothy billow of a cloud.

A sea of waving grasses, and a star,  
A stream of silver ribbon, winding, long;  
A red and golden sunset; from afar  
The plaintive crooning of the night owl's song.



## A BIT O' SILENCE

Green hills, all hazy with a purple mist,  
A row of stately lilies, ivory hued;  
A pair of blue bird lovers, keeping tryst,  
A lone tree, regal in it's solitude.

A meadow, white with daisies, and a lark  
Winging his flight through perfume-laden air;  
A fire-fly's glinting signal in the dark,  
Some happy childish voices free from care.

A cow-bell, tinkling on the summer breeze,  
The swish of tumbling water in the vale;  
The baby moon face peering o'er the trees,  
With twilight stealing down the dying day's trail.

Virginia, I am really beginning to think that I am on the track of "The Blue Bird," that circuitous and apparently endless trail which begins and ends in our own hearts.

I must now cease this prattle and dress the children for the Kauffmann party, next door. Theodore-the-Great would be *dee*-lighted with Dora, I am sure, as she has several small sons and says that to be the mother of a round dozen is her ambition. Her husband is Julius Kauffmann, the well-known and brilliant attorney of Buffalo, you know. I am going up to Lotus Cottage as soon as I have dispatched the babies, as I have a wild desire to see that interesting woman again.

June 9.

The darning basket is filled to overflowing, the day's meals are not even planned and the childrens' faces are sadly in need of an application of soap and water, but I will have to pass up these trivial matters until I have told you of my visit to the cottage in the woods. My dear there's something wierd back of it all and I cannot understand it. I walked boldly to the door and the lady opened it herself; I politely presented my card which she scarcely glanced at (and I am so proud of that "Mrs. Garret Schuyler VanClief," too), and said that I had come to call. She was very gracious but a tiny bit cool at first. I thought, as though she resented my intrusion, but I hadn't been there long before she warmed up and acted quite friendly. Garry says he never saw anything like the way people always tell me the story of their life and their mother's name before she was married and the



amount of their family income before they have known me an hour, but that's only one of his foolish ideas. The dog eyed me suspiciously, however, all the time I was there. I told my hostess that my name was Nancy VanClief and that I lived down in the town and that she'd made such an impression upon me that I simply had to come and that I had lots of lovely friends who would love to come too, if she would give us the privilege of knowing her—all without stopping for breath. She said that her name was Mrs. Bradley (but the old woman called her Miss Rachel) and that she was most grateful for my interest and that of my friends, but that she would have to decline as she had been there several months and would be there indefinitely and that it would be impossible for her to be taken into our circle as she couldn't explain why she was there or anything about herself but could only tell that a great trial had come into her life and she was working out or trying to work out her own salvation.

"So you see," she concluded, "you can hardly take me in without any explanations on my part and then it would hardly be fair to—to—, but you are all very welcome here and I hope you will all stop when you're going through the woods. And I know so many of you by sight," she added, brightening, "and I have woven stories about you all."

Well, Virginia, you know that I am naturally impulsive but really I have never gone so pell-mell into anything before. I fell completely under the spell of her personality and told her that she simply must give us the joy and pleasure of her friendship. She has more magnetism than any person I ever met in my life.

Last evening at the bridge club I was telling them all about her and they are just as interested as I am. Anne struck it right, I think, when she remarked that a true gentlewoman didn't have to be tagged or present credentials and we would gladly welcome her for herself alone. But I can easily understand Mrs. Bradley's reticence about it; the world is hard, you know, and it does look queer, to say the least. Her house is as magnetic as she is; it's nothing but a shack consisting of a big living room, two cubby holes of bedrooms and a rickety kitchen; you can see it all at one glance if the doors are opened as they happened to be. The living room walls are covered with brown burlap and there is a rough stone fireplace, and an improvised window seat running along the whole west wall which is nearly all low



## A BIT O' SILENCE

windows—looking out on the pond. There's a plain mission table on which is a copper lamp, and a few chairs—a sleepy hollow one and a few wicker effects; in one corner is a low divan and in the other a round dining table centered with a low brass bowl of violets; just one rug, a dream of a Bokhara, some good pictures, a lot of books and last but not least, a Steinway baby grand piano! Now what do you make of it? "It was not easy to get my piano here," she said, "but I simply couldn't live without it."

She, herself, is hard to describe accurately because her chief charm is in her ever changing expression and the way her face lights up when she speaks. She's rather tall, dark hair, coiled loosely and low in her neck, a not very pretty nose, lovely ears (I always notice ears) and fine teeth. As for eyes—well, they're gray or blue or green or violet or all four in one, I'm sure I don't know, they're so Chameleon-like, and they are shaded by the loveliest brows and lashes I ever saw. Lastly a chin that expresses all the stubbornness and determination of countless ancestors developed to the fullest extent in this woman; yet it is not prominent by any means and her mouth has the most pathetic droop imaginable. But that chin and a curious glint that I noticed two or three times in her eyes may explain something of the situation. However time will tell. Her hands are pretty and were perfectly bare, not a sign of a ring, though I could see where a wedding ring had been, I know. Now I can hear you saying, "O, Nancy always imagines things as she wants them to be," but really any one would notice the mark—it's quite distinct. She had on a lavender linen dress and pretty pumps and silk stockings. I was pleased to notice the last items for silk stockings and pretty shoes are my only extravagances as you know and I firmly believe that if I ever have to go to the poorhouse in rags and tatters and on the verge of starvation, I will have on silk stockings and pretty shoes for I will part with everything else first. I also approved of the attractive dress, even up in a hut in the woods because it shows that she is a true woman, for of course no real woman is ever absolutely indifferent to a pretty dress or ceases to care how she looks no matter where she may be. I left after having a delicious cup of tea and some awfully good cookies, thanking her for letting me come and begging her to come and see me very soon. She wouldn't promise but I know she will come. O,



I forgot to tell you that her voice is exactly like Ethel Barrymore's.

June 16.

To know Anne Tennant is a liberal education; positively I never saw her equal—such charm, such originality and such breadth of vision! Really one could write a book about her and it would be a best seller, I'm sure; the only draw-back would be that pen and ink could not half do her justice. She adores animals and has a perfect menagerie in her house; a large setter, an Angora cat, two baby gold fishes (Cain and Abel) in a tiny aquarium, a canary bird, a mongrel dog that she took in off the street and that sleeps beside her bed, and a poll-parrot that is the most human creature I ever saw. She also keeps her eye on every stray animal, fowl or bird within a radius of several miles and was up at three one morning last week taking care of a wounded robin that had fallen out of a nest. I won't say that she is absolutely indifferent to clothes for that would not be true and she's too charmingly feminine to be so anyway, but as a rule she doesn't care a rap what she wears and dons any article of wearing apparel that may be at hand. And that is the secret of her great charm, I think—she is equally at ease in a Paris gown or a costume made up of articles of Dick's or Patty's or Shirley's, and likewise quite as delightful.

Richard, Senior, is most unusual; full of fun and always ready for a good time but sort of "old school," you know, quiet and dignified and of a calm and courtly manner that one does not meet with often nowadays. I sometimes wonder if he ever really gets 'mad' at anything.

Yesterday Anne did a most remarkable thing. All the rest of the family happened to be away for the day and Anne herself, with my assistance, was hurrying to make the noon train and had scarcely a moment to spare, when the worst looking ruffian imaginable came to the door and demanded some food; he had close cropped hair and the prison pallor on his face and was really a sight to shatter a womans' nerves. I simply had to leave to get to the 12:15 trolley to meet Ethel Barton but stayed long enough to witness an unusual performance. Anne asked the man in and rushed around and set out on the dining-room table a most inviting looking lunch of bread, butter, cheese, veal loaf,



## A BIT O' SILENCE

strawberry jam and potato chips, all of which happened to be at hand. Hastily taking a sterling silver knife, fork and spoon from the buffet drawer she placed them beside the food, explaining meanwhile that she had to leave in order to catch a train, that there was some hot tea left from her luncheon in the teapot, that the house was entirely alone and would he please shut the door after him as he went out. She then dashed out the front door and I out the back wondering what the world was coming to. When she returned about six she found the dishes washed and piled neatly on the kitchen table, the doors all shut and a note from man thanking her for the food but particularly for trusting him, saying that it was the first act of kindness that had ever been done to him and that it would be a help and inspiration to him all the rest of his life. Now there is food for thought, sister mine, and I hope to profit by Anne's example myself in all my future dealings with humanity in general and with ex-convicts in particular.

Last night we went to a delightful lawn party at the Hobart Marstons; their grounds are enormous and full of lovely shrubbery and trees and vines and the whole scene was like Fairyland with the hundreds of Japanese lanterns strung all about and the moonlight streaming through the trees. We met the elder Watsons there—father and mother-in-law of the pretty Mrs. Kate. They have just returned from a visit in the East and are as delightful as all the other members of the colony. Also a daughter, Elizabeth, not particularly young but most distinguished looking and attractive, and an exceedingly amusing son, whom everyone called Len, about forty, not a practical joker by any means, but the clever sort who is continually making apt remarks and saying things that are excruciatingly funny. He is a member of the large and international family of divorcees and has a young son of eighteen somewhere in the universe, I'm told, but nobody seems to know much about his present location. The whole thing is tragic and a great pity and yet divorce is a great blessing sometimes I believe: there's no sacredness in two people living together as man and wife when they loathe one another and usually there is much to be said for and against both sides. Still I do think that separation would do in many cases and if the people in question would be patient they'd find that there are worse states of existence than living in only semi-harmony with



one's husband or wife even though relations are somewhat strained. You remember Peter's advice to Zoe and Theodore in "Mid-Channel," how he urged them to try and bear with one another a little longer until they had safely passed the shoals of temporary incompatibility that are mid-channel in the stream of every married life.

Do write soon and tell me what there is to the Honolulu proposition—would it be for more than two or three months, do you suppose? Of course, you would almost pass away without Billy but such a trip for him with that old Midas would be quite a sinecure—or epicure, as Mrs. Barney, my fat laundress, said the other day in speaking of her nephew's short hours. She also remarked, as she stood gazing at my Winged Victory, "I suppose that there woman had a head on *eventually*, didn't she?" She is a continual treat.

I was decidedly wrong about Patty Tennant (Virginia, you know), for far from being cold and distant, she's the very embodiment of warm hearted girlishness and sweetness and a perfect dear. Betty VanClief announced her engagement to the family last week and is radiantly happy. Jerry Burton, the lucky man, is from Montreal and is *almost* good enough for Betty. She certainly is the dearest sister-in-law that ever a girl had and I "sure do" appreciate the fact.

Gertrude and the twinnies spent last Saturday here and the honorable Gertrude made me positively weary. She has forgotten Ralph's existence since those babies came. She's the sort of woman who is all mother and not wife at all—the kind to whom motherhood is more vital than wifedom and to whom one's husband is a mere machine to furnish the wherewithal to meet the family expenses while her children are her very life. O, these unseeing women, cannot they perceive their mistake? "By no means neglect your children" say I to all women in general and to the Gertrude type in particular, "but remember that there is a happy medium and that you had your husband before you had your children and that you will probably have him long after your children are married and in homes of their own, and don't make him take a back seat the minute the first baby arrives on the scene." And it's my opinion, Virginia, that it's a mighty stupid woman who cannot be a devoted mother to her children and at the same time be a loving, interested and unselfish wife. Why, Garry and I are pals and make the utmost of every minute together in this uncertain existence and if



## A BIT O' SILENCE

Nancy and Phil are suffering from neglect they certainly don't show it.

I have kept my best news until last. Rachel Bradley came to see me yesterday, saying that she had thought it all over and would love to have us all for friends and be our friend if we cared to have her. I only wish you might know her, Virginia; there's a subtle and elusive something about her that defies description.

June 24.

'Tis said that great literary lights have no conception of order or system and are always unpractical, but don't you believe it! My new maid-of-all-work, Norah, worked for Anne Tennant for two years and a half and a better helper I have never had. She went to Anne a green country girl and learned everything she knows while there and it certainly speaks well for Anne's teaching and capability along practical lines. Norah cooks and does everything else beautifully, quickly and quietly (accent on quietly) and is really a most finished product.

The Vale baby came last night and is a girl, to be named Martha, after Amy's mother. They are still in Buffalo, you know, and will be, of course, for a few weeks but Ned comes out often to cut the grass and see that the weeds aren't outclassing the vegetables in his thriving garden. Ethel Barton has been here for a few days and is quite carried away by the atmosphere of the place but says she couldn't stand a country town for steady diet. I took her down town this morning and gave her a view of Stormfield on a busy day. We actually saw three automobiles and seven wagons and easily fifteen people scurrying about in the "heart of the business district"—she was quite thrilled and wonders how we stand the excitement. Jean Carson came up last evening with a youth who appealed to me at first glance, one Norton Chaddock, called "Sliv"—*why*, I don't know, for there's nothing particularly sylph-like about him. He is madly in love with Jean, as most all men are. Patty Tennant has a long train of admirers also—that is, as long a train as one can have in this town. I never saw so few eligible young men in my life. Gilbertine Watson doesn't care a rap for the men and simply will not put herself out to be nice to them. I admire her for it to a certain extent but her decidedly independent disposition is a draw-back at



times. She's an unusually fine girl, however, and I'm awfully fond of her. I went up stairs a few moments ago and found "my favorite son" dancing madly up and down on my perfectly good mattress and springs that cost a small fortune. He was having the time of his young life and bounding nearly to the ceiling: before I had time to say a word he called out breathlessly, "You needn't tell me to stop doing this, Mubbie, dear, because I *simple* won't!" I immediately put into practice the old adage that actions speak louder than words.

Everyone knows that there is some relationship between the Vales and us and think of course that Ned and I are sister and brother or cousins or something because I was a Vale in the days of my youth. A queer coincidence, isn't it? I have to explain a thousand times a day that the handsome blonde and I are nothing to each other whatsoever but that I'd gladly be a sister to him if need be.

Last evening a man drove up and introduced himself as Dr. Bryant, a Buffalo dentist of whom you have often heard, I'm sure, and said that he was delegated to ask me to take charge of a folk dance or something of the sort, to be one of the numbers on the program at the Society Circus, July 4th and further stated that the committee had heard of my cleverness and versatility in the dancing line (flowers gratefully declined) and all felt sure that my acceptance of the office would insure an unqualified success and so on ad finatum. I fell all over myself trying not to act conscious and with my usual good nature accepted with alacrity and then went in and broke the news to Garry who scolded me unmercifully for getting into any more things. I decided that an Indian dance would be most artistic and began at once to think up the performers. I shall ask young Mrs. Kendricks, Gilbertine and Patty, of course, Rita Marston, little Lulu Albright, Ethel and Natalie from the city, and, oh I can easily get twelve maidens and Dick Tennant, Junior, and a few other lads for scouts, and if Martin Brinkerhoff will play for us we will carry off the honors without a doubt. I'll ask all the girls to come here to concoct costumes and rehearse and if I offer much food as an inducement I am sure they will all accept.

Garry is working diligently on some proverb contest for which the first prize is an automobile and the children are already asking their playmates for different dates next sum-





"A BABY POND TO THE WEST"—Page 17







## A BIT O' SILENCE

mer in "our machine." Did I tell you that the Buells are going to leave town for good? Yes, they're going to Pittsburgh to live and we are certainly sorry and they are too only that it means a promotion for Larry. But it's just my luck to have them go as soon as we get here. Talk about Tom Moore and his dear gazelle! Himmell! Honestly, if I ever fulfill the dream of my life and go to Egypt, I expect to find that the pyramids were removed the day before and the Nile dried up during the night, while the Sphinx will probably be shouting directions to tourists at the top of it's voice!

July 1.

There's another American citizen—yes, a brand new baby son came to the Kauffman's last night, "out of the everywhere into the here." So be it—all boys, and some families have daughters to burn! Dora seems perfectly happy, though, they say, and is so proud of her boy. I love to see that attitude in anyone and always feel a sense of shame and injustice when newly made mothers and fathers express their disappointment in actions or words. If they don't get what they want they might make a bluff at pretending they are satisfied anyway. A well, strong baby is a gift straight from Heaven and should be accepted as such with no murmurings of dissatisfaction whether it be a cunning boy or a tiny girl. O, yes, I know it's all right for me to talk when I have a beautiful little daughter and a handsome son, but I know I would anyway. Philip is so disgusted that the wise old bird passed up our house and says that he is going over to see Dr. Kendricks and ask for four boy babies for us—Garry says to make it eight and have a baseball nine of our own. By the way, our nice doctor is going to give up his practice and go into some electrical business in New York. Everyone will miss him very much but there are two young physicians coming this fall, the one that appeals to me particularly being a Stormfield boy—Dr. Colt. He is to be married in September and begin practice immediately. In the meantime we must all be very careful not to break any limbs or develop anything startling for I simply couldn't call in some of the other old fogies here, though they are very good, I believe. Dr. Kendrick's wife is so delighted at the idea of going; she's a stunning girl and Fifth Avenue and Broadway are much more to her liking than Stormfield's muddy roads and one main street. Anne and Dick are giving a



breakfast party Sunday morning and we will all be there "with bells on" you may be sure. Garry and I are going to take Bruce McCrea with us and introduce him to the stranded aristocracy. You remember he was a great friend and frat brother of Garry's in high school and we are both so fond of him. He's a metallurgist or some wierd thing like that at the big steel foundry and has come out here to board at Mrs. Brooks. I'm sure they all will like him. He's not an Adonis exactly but is such a great big fine creature, so open and fair in all things; there certainly is nothing subtle about Bruce and no hidden meaning in anything he may say. I hope you received the newspaper clipping about Mother Van's wedding—it was very quiet and Mother was a dream in pale gray broadcloth while Mr. Horton (what on Earth shall we call him?) fairly beamed with happiness. They have gone abroad for a couple of months and may all good wishes and happiness go with them.

I manage to see Rachel Bradley every day or so and grow fonder of her all the time. It seems strange that some of the people didn't discover her before but she was sick a great deal when she first came, just out of a hospital, convalescing from a nervous breakdown and didn't go out very much. Some of the girls remember seeing her on the street and in the woods at odd times and had noticed that someone was living in the old lumber shack but it took me to make the real find. Garry says it simply was because I never miss anything under any circumstances but I know that I was led directly to her.

We are busy getting ready for the Society Circus on July fourth—Phil's birthday too, you know. Everybody has worked like beavers, rehearsals are going beautifully and our costumes are fascinating, I think. Indian things do appeal to me strongly; I believe I must have been an Indian maiden in some other incarnation for all things Indian go right to the spot with me. Garry is sure I was a fire worshipper and says he knows I'd have a roaring fire all summer if he would let me. Well, I certainly love fire and like not only the scorching sun and a warm room but I like to *feel* the heat penetrating to my very bones.

Nancy just came in, weeping, with her doll's face smashed completely off. Anne who came in behind her said doll now had what might be called an open countenance, as it were.



## A BIT O' SILENCE

July 5.

Wow-wow-wow-Hiawatha-Minneha tum-tum-tum and so forth and so on! I'm so steeped in Indian music and dancing and sounds that I won't be able to do a thing but string beads, wear mocassins and paint my face for months. It gets into one's blood and makes one fairly dance for joy! There were ten numbers on the program yesterday and our stunt was given first prize, showing that the committee of awards had excellent judgment. It was most exciting—a parade of all the performers in the morning through the town and two performances in the big tent, one at two and the other at eight. I concocted some Indian togs for Nancy and Phil and they rode on the float with us to their unspeakable delight. Our costumes were very attractive, really even the plainest of the girls looking most handsome. Our faces, necks and arms were covered with a rich brown stain and our cheeks and lips tinted a lovely red. We wore very short brown burlap dresses, with red, yellow and brown fringe at the bottom and queer designs worked on in wampum, and Indian characters painted on in black. They were made in one piece, low necked and short sleeved and we had countless strings of beads around our necks and wrists while bead leggings and mocassins, which we rented, completed the dazzling effect. We wore our hair hanging loose with bright red bands across our foreheads fastened in the back with beads, and two Indian quills stuck lightly in on one side. We "played to packed houses" at both performances. I couldn't persuade Rachel to take part but she went as a spectator and assisted Garry at keeping an eye on the kiddies. Our dance was about mid-way on the program and certainly made a hit. The big tent was filled with a seething mass of humanity and while the afternoon performance was simply great, the one in the evening was far prettier, the darkness giving a more realistic effect. Martin was at the piano at the rear of the stage and as he softly played the first few strains of "Creeping"—a little Indian melody, Patty, looking adorable as an Indian maiden, stealthily mounted the platform and lighted the incense and red light in an old Indian kettle that Anne was induced to part with for the occasion and which was suspended from an old iron tripod. Four Indian scouts in full regalia then dashed up and at a signal consisting of four shots in quick succession from their revolvers all the Indian maids pranced up in true aboriginal style, flourishing



their tomahawks, Martin playing the entrancing Indian music meanwhile. We quietly dropped down around the camp fire until the music broke into "Big Chief" and everyone danced back and forth across the stage singing it. At the conclusion we fell into our places around the fire and three of us—Young Dick Tennant, little Lulu Albright and Yours truly arose in turn and gave solo dances that were wildly applauded; Dick's was a sort of a cross between a clog and a cakewalk but was fine just the same, Lulu's was a real Indian affair that her dancing master taught her, while mine was a little Indian flame dance that I improvised as I went along. O, the joy of it, back and forth over the fire and around and around and up and down the stage I went in a perfect ecstasy—I love it so; and Martin's accompaniments were excellent while the lights and the color and the fire were most artistic. Martin played some fascinating Indian airs while we went through some romping Indian drill effects and ended with a genuine Apache dance. The applause was deafening as we went off the stage with a war-whoop and we sang "Rain-in-the-Face" for an encore together with our interpretation of a band of the red ones on the war path. It was great and I never had so much real fun and enjoyment out of anything before. No more stilted civilization after this—it's the simple life and 'back to nature' for mine! Only two hitches marred the perfect completeness of the whole thing. In the afternoon Dick Tennant accidentally shot Mildred Kendricks in the arm and Dr. Laurie, her husband, you know, had to hurry her home in his automobile to cauterize the wound, which was not at all serious, fortunately; and at the conclusion of the evening performance Patty fell headlong off the stage in her haste to join a devoted suitor who was waiting to walk home with her, but a slight shaking-up was all it amounted to. The prize was three large bags of flour which I immediately donated to some poor families. I presume our beautiful maternal parent will be shocked beyond measure when an account of her daughter's antics reaches her ears although she was once heard to remark that as far as her daughter Nancy's actions were concerned her system had become shock-proof long ago.

Rachel came in this morning with Copper while we were at breakfast saying that she had been walking in the woods since dawn and decided that a cup of coffee sipped in our presence would sort of give a finishing touch to the thing.



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"Would'st like to scan the morning Record, Rachel?" asked Garry, offering it to her from force of habit.

"No, thank you, Van." she answered, "I never read the papers."

"Water!" shrieked Garry, "I shall faint—you certainly are of a different persuasion than my charming wife," he added, "she sleeps with them and devours them with all her meals."

"Wretch," I said, "would you have me uninformed as to course of current events or be in doubt as to whether the Smiths or Jones are in town or out—hand me the paper this instant, you took it before I had half finished." O, will people ever stop teasing me about the way I peruse the papers, I wonder?

Anne's breakfast party Sunday was a treat; it was a perfect day; the sky was as blue as Nancy's eyes and the lilt of bird songs filled the air while the dozens of rose bushes in Anne's garden shed their fragrance lavishly, the delicious scents being wafted to our grateful senses through the windows which were flung wide open to the summer breeze. All the world seemed in harmonious tune. The colony turned out in full force, the men declaring that they hated awfully to tear themselves away from church but would make the concession just this once. Anne knew the chairs wouldn't hold out so didn't try to seat the multitude and we arranged ourselves artistically about the floor and window seats. A huge mound of the celebrated Stormfield strawberries on a big wicker tray formed the bewitching centerpiece for the buffet table while deep red June roses were strewn carelessly about. We consumed many dozens of hot buttered rolls, large platters of fried chicken, deep bowls of scalloped potatoes and coffee that Garry declared was "almost as good as Grandmother's."

"Help, help, Kate is eating the decorations," shouted Geoff Donnelly, as that charming lady began to nibble daintily at the scarlet mound.

"O, she'd eat her best friends out of house and home," said Anne, complacently, "but let her alone, Geoff, she's apt to get violent, you know, if she's interfered with." Bruce looked questioningly at me for a brief moment and then with a wicked glance at his hostess followed Kate's example.



"You're all right, Bruce, you're one of us," cried Dick, slapping him on the back, "that's what they're there for—decorations be hanged!"

"O, very well," said Anne, "spoil the looks of my party if you want to, for as usual in this house, what the Oracle decrees is law—so pitch in, good people, and do your worst. Anyway it's the last I'm going to give for a long while, we're so poor," she continued, "and I've decided to sell everything in the house except the live-stock so look around and select what you want and you can have things at your own price, then we'll auction off what's left or have a series of raffles; this poverty business is getting tiresome and I'll gladly dispose of everything, the children included."

We drank our coffee out under the trees in the garden, and then wandered up and down the rough stone paths, loth to turn our backs upon it's allurements.

Bruce made a most favorable impression upon everyone as I knew he would and he expressed his gratitude to us most warmly for having brought him, his strong face beaming.

"And so you really like our friends?" I inquired, as we walked home along the sun-flower bordered path connecting Anne's garden with ours.

"Like them!" he ejaculated, "they're the best ever—they make a fellow feel right at home the first thing—it's awfully good of you two to take so much interest in me—and I appreciate it more than I can tell you—it's going to make mother's being—away—a lot easier, too," he finished, huskily.

"Don't speak of it, dear," I said, hastily, "and remember that it's as great a pleasure for them to have you for a friend as for you to have all of them. Isn't Anne a delightful hostess?" I went on, "do you know, she has the art down finer than anyone I ever knew with the exception of Aunt Charlotte Fillmore. Aunt Charlotte certainly heads the list and has a knack of making everyone who enters her door feel absolutely at ease—they know they are welcome and feel perfectly at home from the first minute. It's an art I tell you and I'm trying hard to acquire it though it's born in one. Goodness knows everyone is always more than welcome in my home and I try to imbue the atmosphere with a spirit of warm friendliness but I haven't Aunt Charlotte's gift for a minute," and I sighed audibly,



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"Listen to her ranting, Bruce," said Garry, "why, man, Nan welcomes every Tom, Dick and Harry that comes along with open arms and would take in anyone without a question—I've often said that we ought to christen our home 'The House of Refuge' and remarked that it would have been a good 'underground railway station' in slave-days."

"Well, I try to be human, anyway," I remarked, "but I'm not a circumstance to Anne or Aunt Charlotte for a minute—dear Aunt Charlotte—how lovable and unselfish and wonderful she is!"

"Well, you're all right, Nancy, just the same, and I'm awfully strong for you," declared Bruce, whereupon Garry put his arm around me and drew me close to him, as he always does when other men say nice things to me.

"Tell me about that attractive Mrs. Bradley who went home with the Thorntons," said Bruce, "she certainly made a hit with me—has she a husband and where does she live?"

"She lives with her servant, Melia, and her dog, Copper, up in a cottage in the woods," I explained, "and we all love her very much and have induced her to go about with us—there's a sort of mystery about her and as she doesn't seem inclined to lift the veil, we accept her without any explanations on her part as to why she's here or what she's doing; so be careful not to make any breaks," I admonished.

"I will indeed," agreed Bruce, "all I ask is to be allowed to look at her once in a while—when do you suppose we'll see her again?"

"Hold on, there," said Garry, "don't lose your head, an irate husband and flock of children may appear on the scene any day."

"O, don't joke about her, dear," I pleaded, "she's so lovely and so sad and pitiful, and as for seeing her," I added turning to Bruce "hardly a day passes but what we are together. I consider her one of my dearest friends and count it a great privilege to know her."

"And likewise do I," echoed Garry, "I was merely trying to check our guest's headlong tumble over the brink."

"Well, I am not usually susceptible," said Bruce, "so there really is cause for alarm."

Nancy and Phil dashed up to meet us at this juncture so further conversation on the subject was prevented. I do hope Bruce won't fall in love with Rachel because it wouldn't



do him any good, I know, and anyway I want him for Gilbertine.

I will simply have to stop talking to you and tackle the darning basket this minute or my family, like the immortal Peoria, will be in grave danger of having to "go bare-legged to the party." I almost forget to tell you that, in response to repeated pleadings, the children and I are going to Crescent Beach about the 10th to spend a few days with Gertrude and Ralph at their bungalow. I will leave Garry to the tender mercies of Grandma Burwell and will demand of the colony daily bulletins, which I will pass along to you.

CRESCENT BEACH, ONT., July 14.

Here we are, bag and baggage, having "trolleyed" and "ferreyed" and "dummy-trained" in safety, and are having a beautiful time. The view in all directions is superb and the beach is a long, shining stretch of wonderfully firm sand, gold in the sunlight and silver in the moonlight. Ralph calls their cottage the "Bungle-O!"—it has so many defects in spite of all their careful planning. The babies are very cunning and Gertrude is actually beginning to evince an occasional bit of interest in her husband despite the momentous fact that she is the mother of twins. She is quite chubby (in your class, you know) and I feel like a fairy beside her. She says that when people don't want to tell her how stout she is they get around it by saying, "Dear me, now nice it must seem to be so healthy!" You know you always said that there was nothing worse than being called "wholesome looking" unless it was being described as "good-hearted," or having someone say of you, "she means well, anyway." I maintain that to be called a "cute little thing" is the worst ever, as it means absolutely nothing. I always feel downhearted or puffed up according to the way I hear myself described. There's a vast difference, my dear, between being called a "skinny little thing" and hearing someone say of you "O, she's so petite and dainty, don't you know?"

Anne writes that the Vales are back from town and that the baby is darling and the image of Ned, also that Rosamond Thornton has a lot of new clothes (she does pick the most marvelous things off her rich relatives) and that the Grangers have taken the house across from us. They are the people from Albany that I wrote you about meeting at Sally's one day. Anne says that Roberta has a large house-party on at



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Fenway Farm and that I must get back in time for the corn-roast at the lake which she is planning for her guests. She assures me that they are taking good care of Rachel and love her more every day. Anne is sure that there is a *grand* husband in the case and says that Bruce is certainly madly in love with Rachel and that Gilbertine, the man-hater, is evincing an unusual interest in Bruce—the plot thickens! Patty's letter is full of the teacher of Gilbert dancing, who is coming to Stormfield for the winter—series of lessons to be ten dollars per—I haven't a spare penny but will probably "follow the crowd" and Miss Knowles will get her ten dollars per—haps. O, that's awful, I apologize humbly but it just slipped out. Last night we went to the Yacht Club dance, Gertrude's baby brother being my cavalier. He's a nice child of nineteen years and six feet of tallness and he dances divinely and was most attentive. The *perfect* enjoyment of the evening, however, was marred by the absence of Garry. I have missed him every minute, of course, but, actually, when the orchestra began playing "My Beautiful Lady," I thought I'd pass right on, for you know how Garry *can* waltz. But before the evening was over I had learned to Boston and I forgot completely such prosaic things as husbands and home. And such pretty girls and dainty gowns—the soft, shimmering vari-colored materials looking so pretty against the dark coats of the men. But did you ever notice that in ninety-nine books in a hundred written by men the heroine is invariably attired in "a gown of some soft clinging *white* material with a flower at her throat"; why clinging white, especially, I don't know, but white it is and also, invariably, throat. I'm very fond of white gowns myself and always have been, but blue crepe de chine with pink rosebuds, yellow chiffon with violets pink Marquissette with a touch of gold, and pale green messaline with a corsage bouquet of orchids aren't bad. Garry said that he would probably come over to go back with us but whether he does or not we turn our faces homeward on Saturday. The children have been perfect angels and a credit to their beautiful mother every minute. Gertrude sends her love to you and many hugs and kisses to the diminutive strawberry blonde.

STORMFIELD, July 20.

"Be it ever so 'umble there's no place like 'ome"—amen. One would think that we had been to Africa and back, I was so delighted to get here but really the getting *home*,



even if one goes away for but a few days, is the best part of the journey—always.

Esther Lane loathes sewing and loses all patience with me for being so bound to the needle and she racks her brain to devise ways and means of tearing me away from it.

"Mrs. Worth," she said, coming in yesterday to find me running the machine like mad, "could you be induced to leave that creation, for a brief space and come with me to the outskirts of Paris—I have, tied to your hitching post, a thing that the livery man called a buggy and a creature with four legs that answers to the name of horse and if you will share the equipage and likewise the expense we will have some fun. I know a dear old road that leads to a dear old house in which there are some dear old candlesticks"—she went no further, for I hurled the "creation" from me and off we went. Such a time as we had! We lost ourselves twice, we got stuck in brambles, the horse fell down, we found neither the road, the house nor the candlesticks and weary, worn and discouraged and in imminent danger of a hot-box, we drove sadly into town with the sun sinking (also sadly) into the sad west, and Anne, whom we had picked up on the road, perched dejectedly in front of us—her feet hanging over in the dust. In short, the affair was not what would be termed a success in the true sense of the word.

But in spite of our weariness we were able to shriek at Anne's story of *her* day, which had been spent with Remington's old nurse, way down on the Creek road.

"Girls," she said, "she's a treat, quaint and dear, but so funny; her one ambition, she says, is to be *genteel*, and she picks her words and phrases with such care that they quite outdo themselves. I sat demurely through her description of the departed daughter Jennie who had such "a bright eye" and Tom, very much alive, who had 'such a nice even tooth, even if I *do* say it' (I could almost see him with one lone molor), but when I praised the pork and beans the climax came. 'O; now go on, Mrs. Tennant,' she said blushing with pride, 'don't lay the praise to me—maybe I do cook 'em up well but, then, these are *an awful nice bean!*' "

"Drop me at Buttercup, girls," she said, "if Kate's out, I'm going to hurl some of her coronation robes upon my fairy form in an attempt to dazzle some diplomat or other who is coming out in mother's wake tonight—you know the kind that mother always has in tow, and for goodness sake,



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if either of you has anything particularly inviting in the food line, skip up the sunflower path with it and put it on the dining-room table; I'll be in the library greeting parent and Dip."

It's been sizzling all day and after a quiet morning with Rachel in her woods I lunched with Kate at Buttercup. Kate loves the heat as much as I do and we just revelled in the penetrating rays of the sun—really I'm as brown as an Indian while Philip and little Nan are perfect papooses. Phil's physique is marvelous for so young a child—he'll probably be a famous fullback some day.

I happened to mention after luncheon that as Norah was out I'd have to run home and lock the house before going down into the seething marts of trade with Gilbertine, and Kate, with a look of wonder in her eyes, remarked that such a proceeding was the height of folly and a waste of valuable time.

"Because," she explained, "all that is in your house is yours and in my house, mine, therefore, nobody else wants it and nobody else will take it so it's perfectly safe." Would that I could *live* her religion as she does or had one tiny atom of her faith.

Patty just came in quite disgusted because she had made a custard that wouldn't cuss.

"There, little girl, don't cry," said I, comfortingly, "wait until you try to make some frosting and get a frost."

"Horrors," cried Patty, "worse, and more of it; but Nancy, darling, I'll forgive you if you'll produce something in the nature of an evening wrap in which I may swath myself to go to the dance with Howard tonight—mother has gone to town with the family raincoat as she's going down the river with the Spauldings and thought she might need it."

"Help yourself, dear child," said I, "I haven't much in that line, you know, but you're more than welcome to my scanty stock—just look over the pile of debris in the sewing room and take your choice—my military cape might do, only it will come about to your knees while it almost trails on me. Garry calls me the family scrap-basket because everybody hands over all their old duds to me and I have to do many queer things to the same in order to make them available but I manage to produce some rather pleasing effects, nevertheless."



"It doesn't always pay to be too nifty with the needle, methinks, for then one *has* to sew—but I am terribly stupid in that respect," said she, "Verily, blessed is the mother who expects nothing in the line of sewing from her eighteen-year-old daughter, for she will not be disappointed."

"Well, you're quite clever enough in other ways," I told her, "so don't worry about it."

Yesterday Esther Lane and I nearly had convulsions at some epistles we found in her erstwhile maid's budoir. Said maid was about fourteen and had been at Esther's for several weeks assisting with the house-work, but spending the greater part of her time buried in the pages of Bertha M. Clay and writing letters to a friend in Akron. She would compose them in pencil and then copy them in ink and had evidently forgotten to take the original manuscripts with her when she departed. Esther and I made peace with our consciences and read a few, an extract from one of them running thusly: "I wish that you could see me now, Flossie; I am *visiting* at Dr. Lane's manshun on James Avenue; they are very wealthy and strictly up to date and they eat with their fingers sticking out, they're so stylish!"

"'Oh wad some power the giftie gie us—,' " said Esther.

"'To see oursel's as others see us!'" I finished, and we laughed until we cried.

Addie's predecessor was continually harping on her large circle of acquaintances, every state in the Union being represented I think. One morning Esther's brother, Knowlton, was tearing out of the house at breakneck speed to make connections with his train for New York when she of the large visiting list called shrilly, "O, Mr. Knowlton, Mr. Knowlton, come back, wait a minute!" Tony retraced his steps thinking that the house was on fire or something equally tragic had occurred and maid said coyly, "O, I just wanted to ask you to do me a favor. When you get to New York will you please give my regards to Mr. Foote?" Knowlton could have strangled her on the spot but refrained from doing so and managed to make his train in spite of the delay, I believe. Some people always have such funny girls and 'then agin' others do not.

I did have some amusing experiences, however, with a few of the samples who answered the advertisement that I put in Stormfield's one paper before I was fortunate enough to secure my prize Norah. One young thing, who was very



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pretty, said that she wanted but "one night off a week and that was Wednesday for prayer-meeting but that she must have every Sunday all day as her family had always made a practice of being together on the Sabbath!

"We're rather given to the same idea," remarked Garry dryly. "I fail to see the point in paying a helper five dollars per and then slaving all day Sunday."

"Well, I make no exception to the rule," said the blonde one, firmly, "but this place looks awfully good to me and I'd love to come and I'm sure you'd find me very satisfactory, and you'd get used to the Sunday business," she concluded, reassuringly, "and if you do decide to give me a trial address 'Opal Kleener, Toad Hollow, N. Y.' "

"Wonder if she's any relation to Pearl Ammonia?" whispered Garry under his breath and as Miss Opal drove off beside the dapper youth who had been waiting for her in a runabout he suggested that he wouldn't waste any time or stationery on jewels of the paste variety.

"These fairies who demand every Sunday do not appeal to me, Nancy," he said decidedly, "and I draw the line at that; Sunday is our only whole day together and it's completely spoiled if you are cooking and washing dishes from morning to night, and then before you realize it the one day proposition evolves itself into week-end house party effects and your up against it for certain."

I asked a buxom-looking country girl who called why she had left her last place, saying that I should think that the fact of the Waltons having all the latest electrical appliances in the line of flat irons, toasters and vacuum cleaners would have been an inducement to stay forever.

"Well, Ma'am," she declared vehemently, "all them fancy fixins was awful nice and convenient and I liked the missus real well, too, but O, them lazy daughters of hers! Why, would you believe it, ma'am!" she went on, "I had to do every one of them God-forsaken dishes all alone after each meal, while them three great girls, not one of 'em bein' a day under sixteen, would get right up from the table just like they was company and walk into the parlor and set."

August 10.

It is only recently, Jinny, that I have begun to realize what an awful responsibility it is to bring up children; when they are tiny babies all that is necessary is to minister to their



physical wants and care for them in their helplessness and we don't give a thought to the future, but suddenly—presto, change!—they appear before our astounded visions as real human beings with minds and wills of their own and characters to be molded, and we, Virginia, we, the mothers and fathers, are the molders and are held responsible for the finished product. As I say, I have just begun to feel the stupendous importance of the task before me or maybe I am getting old, but anyway, I had two little experiences today that brought forcibly home the fact that my children are to be reckoned with. I was in the middle of a letter from Loring this morning and had arrived at the description of Saturday's game, which he said was the most exciting ever. In the last half of the ninth, with the score 3-0 in Cornell's favor, Michigan had two men on bases and two out, when our adorable brother went to bat and knocked the ball over the fence and tied the score; then they won the game in the tenth inning. Rah! Rah! Rah! They are looking for the ball still, I believe. Just then the telephone rang and I recognized the voice of my daughter who was spending the day with Josie Hastings.

"Mother," she said, "I called up to say that I won't be home to dinner or all night as Josephine is having a little birthday dinner this evening and I am going to help her receive and we'll send Morton up for my best white dress and slippers—good-bye." I was so dumbfounded that I was speechless for about ten minutes and then I had a little talk with my child, by wire, in which I told her that as all plans had been made I would allow her to remain but in the future I would prefer to be consulted as to her program and not merely acquainted with the perfected arrangements. She was quite cool and likewise "sot" and after a few words with Roxane who was as amused as I, I fell to pondering on the subject with which I began this letter, my consternation being furthered by the other little experience, the second one, with my son: He does not seem to outgrow his passion for jumping on beds despite all my admonitions and repeated punishments. Finding him leaping skyward again today from the unusually springy mattress in the guest room, I delivered a long and serious lecture on the enormity of the crime he was committing, the frightful cost of springs and bedding in general and laid particular stress on the fact of his absolute disregard of my wishes. He was balancing on



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the foot of the bed during the course of my speech and as I was drawing it to a close he turned a wonderful backward somersault.

"Fade away, mother," he said, without a suspicion of a smile, "fade away, my ears are tired." I beat a hasty retreat and sat down to think it over. There's no use, Virginia. I will sew for them and work for them but Garry will have to do the "bringing up," I can't. It reminded me of Loring's pet story of the school teacher and the young incorrigible and the impression that she did *not* make. You remember how she finally cornered him and talked long and earnestly about his manifold faults and wickedness, and observing that he seemed so very attentive and had not taken his eyes from her face, she felt that she had won the day. I can imagine her state of mind when he drawled slowly, "Why, it's your *lower* jaw that moves, ain't it?"

Anne gave an "initiation" dinner for the Grangers last night and Marshall responded to Richard's address of welcome to the "colony" by relating a little conversation that he had with Mrs. Haynes, the woman with whom he and Connie boarded the first week of their stay in Stormfield—until their house was ready.

"She painted a most lurid picture of the disgraceful "doings" down in this part of the town," he said, "recounting numerous tales of kimona and pajama parties, midnight suppers and affinity dinners, gambling orgies and moonlight revels participated in by the "Stranded Aristocracy" of "Jingle End," as she called it. 'Far be it from me to say anything bad of anyone or to repeat a word of scandal, Mr. Granger,' " mimicked Marshall, "'but you don't want to get in with that "bunch"—there are plenty of others to go with and Mis' Granger—she seems such a lady.' "

"Well, from your interesting description, Mrs. Haynes, I'm rather inclined to think that that's the "bunch" we *do* want to get in with—they certainly sound good to me," Marshall answered. Chorus, "Bully for you!"

"Did she faint on the spot or go up stairs and swoon?" asked the master of Fenway.

"She did neither," said Marshall, "but turned green with envy when I told her that we had known the Brinkerhoffs for years and already had our passports."

Tonight is the hayrack ride and corn roast at the beach and we are anticipating lots of fun. We are going to roast



weiners and marsh-mellows (digestible combination) and take large hampers of sandwiches, fried cakes, rolls and fruit and the Tennant coffee pot which I am sure is the largest in the world. The men are going to take their bathing suits but we girls are quite content to confine our sporting in the waves to the garish light of day—no moonlight effects or ice baths for us, thank you. The Vales aren't going for Ned won't leave that baby—his fatherhood is wonderful and the most potent factor in his makeup.

Bob Thornton took such a cunning picture of Phil and Nancy and the second Donnelly yesterday—he is scarcely ever parted from his camera and takes some marvelous pictures. The nicest thing about Bob is his handshake, a perfectly wonderful grip, the strong, firm sort, that gives you assurance and makes you feel welcome and human and of some importance; quite the reverse of the jelly fish clasp that one so often comes in contact with and that makes one's whole spinal column collapse instantly.

I almost neglected to tell you that Betty VanClief and Jerry are to be married September 4th—they are hurrying things up a bit because Lucie Horton, who is to be maid of honor has to return to New Orleans sooner than she expected. Rachel has been down stairs at the piano for the last half hour and has presented a most delightful program. But she is now playing Chopin's funeral march, by request, and I shall go mad if she doesn't stop. Garry loves it and just came in a few minutes ago and demanded it. I wish she would sing the "Rosary" but I don't dare ask her again, for I did once and she said that she never sang it for anyone; it is always on her piano, however.

The field at the side of the house is a joy and delight—pink clover and buttercups run riot there while the big Kauffmann corn field with its tall waving stalks makes a most fitting back-ground. The golden-rod is in full bloom, too; I must go out this minute and gather an armful for the veranda.

August 19.

This is the kind of weather that makes me feel amiably disposed towards everybody; a succession of perfect days, beautifully warm but not sultry, little showers every now and then that lay the dust and every field and garden flaunting itself in a gorgeous array of colors.





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Rachel has captivated everyone and when she is not with us we all spend most of our time wildly conjecturing as to the reason for her hermit's existence. Bruce thinks she is a religious fanatic and is doing penance for imaginary sins while Garry advances the theory that she's paying up a bet—says she shows her sporting blood by being such a trump and she'll be game to the finish.

Bob Thornton is sure she's been jilted and is dying of a broken heart but Lennie Watson says she's a great actress in disguise, studying some part and will electrify the entire world when she bursts forth again.

But I know better, Virginia, they are all wrong; there is something deeper than a whim back of it all, some big vital problem that has come into her life and she is facing it alone and trying to get her mental bearings in the meantime. I spent yesterday at Lotus Cottage and was so happy with my Rachel. It was a soft, lazy day and *almost* hot enough to suit me—we passed the hours under the trees and paddling about on the little toy lake and the time went all too quickly. I made bold enough to ask Rachel the significance of the inscription over her door and she told me that she picked it up in a shop in Chicago on her way here and that it meant nothing absolutely so far as she was concerned—she simply took a fancy to the quaint lettering. Of course, that is not so and she was simply trying to evade the question but 'all's fair in love and war' and this is both. There is also a withered spray of lotus blossom in a slender Teco jar on the stone mantle piece. She is courting forgetfulness, that is certain, but I fear me she will have to pay more fervent court to the elusive jade if she wants to win her, for that troublesome meddler, Memory, is always at hand to bewilder the suitor in such a wooing. I took particular notice of the few books that she has; you say that you can nearly always determine a person's mentality by the books he has about him. Now what do you conclude from this collection?

David Copperfield, Adam Bede, A much worn "Emerson," Twelfth Night, As You Like It, Romeo & Juliet, Scarlet Letter, Wood Carver of 'Lympus, Little Women, Eugene Field's Poems, Kirkham's "Ministry of Beauty," John Halifax, A Ragged "Browning," Garden of Allah, The Luxury of Children, Bird's Christmas Carol, Vanity Fair, and Does God Send Trouble?



The last is an exquisite thing if one could believe it all. Quite a human collection, methinks, and, O, I forgot—The Lades Home Journal was likewise lying carelessly on the table; positively if I ever get to Mars or Jupiter by aeroplane I fully expect to find The Ladies Home Journal in every house I enter.

Her only pictures are a fine Corot, Taylor's beautiful "Hanging of the Crane," and Ferruzzi's "Madonna of the Streets." Rachel says she loves it because the mother looks so human and the baby seems so real. She is passionately fond of children and shows it in a thousand little ways. There are no photographs in sight and the only thing on the wall in her bed room is a little Scotch stanza, in a plain rosewood frame, which I memorized:

*"When the song's gone out o' your life,  
you can't start another while it's a  
ringin' in your ears; 'tis best to have a  
bit o' silence and out o' that, maybe, a  
psalm will come bye and bye."*

Isn't it lovely? and quite significant, also, I think. She is very psychic and feels things even before they are said or done. She is also extremely sensitive to personalities and to things material, the one thing that keeps her from going to pieces being a saving sense of humor, one of her most potent characteristics. We agree on really very few subjects and almost came to blows yesterday, we got into such a discussion about all concerning the psychic and the occult. I'm a rank fatalist, you know, and yesterday was expounding upon my ideas of the future and got more than I bargained for.

"But, my dear," protested Rachel, "you can't be a fatalist as you profess to be and yet believe in the doctrine of evolution for they are diametrically opposed to one another, you know."

"But I can be, for I do," I declared, wildly, bewildered at the manner in which my ideas were being rent asunder, "I most certainly do not think that death is the end, for I won't believe that a thinking mind and soul can be snuffed out like a candle, and yet I also firmly believe that we are nothing but puppets and are moved by the hand of destiny across the checker board of life."



## A BIT O' SILENCE

"That is both ridiculous and inconsistent," Rachel interposed, "Now I *know* that 'I am the Captain of my soul, I am the master of my fate'—why, Nancy dear, we all of us control our movements, hold destiny in the hollow of our hand."

"O, do we?" I snapped, "then perhaps you'll tell me why, when we have planned to do a certain thing at a given time, we will find ourselves gently but firmly guided in an opposite direction and subsequent events invariably prove that the deviation from our original intent was all for the best. Maybe the train we intended to take will have been wrecked or the boat we meant to sail on, go down, and it's the same every day of our lives; how often you hear people say; 'Well, if anyone had told me a few hours ago that I would be *here* now, I would have scouted the idea—I had planned to do thus and so.' "Now what does that prove?" I concluded triumphantly.

"Nothing whatever to me," declared Rachel, promptly, "and Nancy, dear, I have never said or given the impression that I thought that death ended it all, for if I did think so and believed that the grave drowned our sorrows, I wouldn't be here." (I wish you might have *heard* her say that, Virginia) "O, I most certainly believe that we control events," she resumed.

"Well, I can't agree with you about that, Rachel; I can't believe that we poor weaklings have the power to control circumstances or events in the least degree—though I do think that we are able to control the manner in which they affect us," I conceded—"but there it ends."

"Nancy," asked Rachel, "do you really think that God sends sorrow and trouble to us and tortures us almost beyond endurance—the dear, all-powerful God who Himself is Love? O, Nancy," she cried, appealingly, "don't say that you believe He would *willingly* send trials and tribulations and awful accidents and death and sickness. Do you believe, for instance, that *He* would take a baby from it's mother, just to torture her?"

"Well, if He's all-powerful, why doesn't He prevent all those awful things?" I asked stubbornly, and then blushed for shame at such a confession of sacreligious disloyalty, and realizing at the same time that I was getting in pretty deep.

"Because, dear," she said quietly, as the sun sank lower in the western sky—"because the devil—the evil influence that permeated even the Garden of Eden, is almost more



powerful than Divine Love and all that God can do for us is to guide us in the right direction by the beacon of His Love and trust to our own sense of right to resist the temptations that beset our path and come eventually into the shelter of His welcoming arms."

I said nothing, silenced by the obviousness and lucidity of her answer, but sat quietly drinking in the beauty of the sun's rays on the water.

"And then think," I said finally, "of the little things, a look or a word that can either make or mar a human life—they must have been intended and a part of the Great Plan."

"Even so," said Rachel, "how do you account for the fact that some lives are all sunshine and happiness while others are made up wholly of misery and sorrow?"

"The Law of Compensation," I replied, complacently, "we'll get all that's coming to us in the other world if we don't in this, and, too, we may have had more than our share of both or either in a former incarnation."

"So you likewise believe in the transmigration of souls," Rachel stated with a touch of irony in her tone, "really, for such a little thing as you are, Nancy, you carry around an awful burden of beliefs, and, may I ask," she inquired blandly, "what theory or reason do you advance for the same?"

"Theory—reason—piffle—" I said, crossly, "I never know *why* I believe anything, I just do, that's all—now, Rachel, dear, don't get like Charley Geers"—cousin Karl's friend, you know—"he invariably has a reason for everything he does and says and is the most uninteresting creature in existence—he always reminds me of Grape-Nuts and Postum Cereal."

"And anyway, what a waste of time it is to discuss the question," I concluded wearily, "it's a thing that philosophers and deep thinkers of all ages have been pondering for centuries and they're just exactly where they were a thousand years ago. If the dear Lord meant us to know anything more than we do about this perplexing existence or what is to follow it, He would have told us long before this."

"Very true," said Rachel, and with her eyes fastened on the distant hills, she quoted softly those exquisite lines from the Rubaiyat.

Strange, is it not, that of the myriads who  
Before us pass'd the door of darkness through;  
Not one returns to tell us of the road,  
Which, to discover, we must travel too."



## A BIT O' SILENCE

At this juncture the tall shadows of Garry and Bruce appeared through a break in the trees and were a welcome sight.

"Come on in, the water's fine," I called to them, "we have been dipping in the ocean of philosophy and are now pulling for the shore as we got beyond our depth and nearly floundered."

"Well, we've got some life preservers in the shape of some bully ice cream cones," said Bruce, "we bought them over there at the athletic field where a small boy was selling them faster than he could take in the coin."

"Yes, and the crowd was evincing more interest in the cones than in the game," disgustedly remarked Garry; to whom a good ball game is the highest form of art.

September 5.

What is there about the wedding march from Lohengrin that makes one want to laugh and weep and shiver and thrill at one and the same time? It always seems to have that influence and last night at the wedding I was more affected than ever before. Little sister was a dainty and beautiful bride and made a charming picture as she graciously received the guests, standing beside her nice-looking husband and trying to act unconscious of the shining new wedding ring on her finger. Jerry is just fine and I know they'll be happy as larks. Betty was even prettier when she went away—a symphony in royal blue with a perfectly howling hat. The gifts were beautiful and all seemed to express much loving thought and exquisite taste—save one. For what did Jerry's office force send but a white plaster lion over four feet in length—rampant on a huge pedestal—the latter bearing the names of the entire force scratched in ink. Betty simply had to display it with the other gifts for the people from the office were invited and honestly I thought we'd burst trying to keep from laughing out loud, for fear some of the donors might be at our elbows. It looked for all the world like a full grown pony or St. Bernard dog, if there could be such a thing as a white one.

Jerry said on the quiet that they'd have to build a kennel for Mark—as they call it—but Garry told them it would have to be a full sized stable or nothing.

Last Thursday we all went to the Stormfield fair where we spent several hours and thirteen dollars and had the time



of our lives. We'd never been to a county fair before and Garry says he will never go to one again, but it sure was a circus. The day was sweltering but just the kind for a fair and it was such fun wending our way in and out through the crowds and listening to the fakirs and spielers calling their wares, the medley of sights and sounds bewildering to be sure but the whole panorama unusually attractive. Nancy and Philip were speechless with delight over the mid-way, their chief joy being the merry-go-round, of course, and a vile concoction called the ocean wave—the most sea-sick contrivance ever contrived. Garry said that the only good thing was the ball game but I had a leaning toward the dozens of cheap lunch counters and parted with most of my money in exchange for their delicatessen—Elizabeth Watson and I fairly haunted the awful looking stands and devoured hot dog sandwiches and circus lemonade ravenously but somehow couldn't seem to persuade the others that we were enjoying ourselves. Kate Watson says that she often wonders if she will ever arrive at that stage of hunger where she could be induced to eat a hot dog sandwich, but Elizabeth and I tell her that she's missing half of her life wondering. The thing that interested me most in the Woman's Building was the exhibit of antiques, some of them being of incredible age and marvelously interesting while others were fakes of the first water but none the less interesting nevertheless. One smart woman entered an old beaded bed-room slipper and tagged it as "a sandal worn by the Sultan's favorite in a turkish harem." Needless to say it won first premium. Husband began to get real peevish and low in his mind towards dusk so dragged us forcibly homeward while we still had car fare left but I was entranced by the whole thing and am going every day next year. I tell Garry that I'll put him in as an antique if he doesn't improve as regards cold-water throwing by that time but he says that he'll exhibit me as the wild woman of Borneo and so we're quits.

We've persuaded Rachel to have a telephone put in and we're much relieved about her—really, I couldn't bear the thought of her being up there alone with winter coming on and no means of communication with the town, except on foot. Of course the faithful Melia is on guard all the time but it's not quite the same, you know. Melia told me the other day that she was so grateful to us all for our kind-



## A BIT O' SILENCE

ness to Miss Rachel. She said that her dear mistress was getting very melancholy and worrying her considerably just when we appeared upon the scene and she considers it the direct hand of Providence. I try to pump Melia on every possible occasion but there's nothing doing; she's a perfect clam in regard to all that pertains to Rachel but when the psychological moment arrives for her to speak she will do so and that's as true as my name is Nancy.

The Colts are back from their honeymoon and fill the void left by the Kendricks most satisfactorily; little bride is just the kind I like and the doctor is fine. I had to call him the other day when Nancy fell over the veranda railing and split her head open about four inches, and he appealed to me on the spot—perfectly dear with children and the kind who gives one a feeling of confidence the moment he enters the room. Nancy is alright but will have to be swathed in bandages—turban effect—for some time and she is anything but pleased at the prospect.

“It simply spoils my looks,” she remarked yesterday, in a most discouraged tone, as she turned from a ten-minutes' survey of herself in the mirror. I never heard of any other children having as many bumps and tumbles as mine do; really it's continuous vaudeville here all the time. I believe I will have to follow Roberta Lane's example and beat them if they are not more careful. Truly, she had to spank her Marjorie finally for the child fell down stairs and up stairs and into things and out of things until Roberta decided that it was pure “carlness” and that a gentle reminder in the way of a whack occasionally might assist matters materially. You know falling up stairs has always been Loring's long suit and he still does it—at twenty-three. I invariably know that he's coming when I hear that crash—bang half way up. He was here over night Sunday (I told you I expected him) on his way back to college from Cobalt. He's handsomer than ever and the girls were crazy about him. He said that he wished that he might have visited both of his adorable sisters at the same time; it's too bad that you're so far away. He will be here for a week in January after the mid-year exams and I am going to have a house party out from town for him for the Library Ball. Rachel said yesterday that she is going to have some sort of a party soon at her shack—she feels so indebted to us all and says that we certainly saved her reason by coming into her life just when we did.



## A BIT O' SILENCE

She has two or three unique ideas and I know she can work them out.

Bob Thornton came out on the late train with us last night and showed us a perfectly lovely snap-shot of Patty and Anne that he had taken Sunday morning.

"I was making the short cut through from Sally's" he explained, "and discovered two American beauties in the Tennant garden and, being a natural born "snitcher," I plucked them with my camera."

"A full-blown rose and a bud, as it were" said I, looking over his shoulder. "Bob, you're a wonder in the camera line."

"Well, who wouldn't be, with such subjects" remarked Garry, in an injured tone, his admiration for the Tennant family individually and collectively, being paramount.

The teacher of Gilbert dancing arrived yesterday and is at Kate Watson's for the winter (in Buttercup Cottage there is always room for one more); she is a Miss Knowles from Harrisburg and a girl of undoubted charm.

By the way, I've learned to stencil—aren't you impressed? Esther Lane initiated me into the dark secret and I've stenciled everything in sight—curtains, table-runners, dresser covers and a thousand other things. Garry wants to know if I've decided on the design that I'm going to stencil the children.

We like the Grangers immensely and it seems as if we had known them always. Marshall is quaint and clever and has the drollest way of talking but needs a hair cut badly; Constance is very pretty and stylish but not madly infatuated with the cares of housekeeping but she is a girl who has always been waited upon and consequently doesn't know much about the beauty of honest toil. She has charming manners and is accomplished in so many little ways and can make positively the best salads that anyone could imagine, Gilbertine and her domestic science not excepted.

September 18.

I have neglected you shamefully for the last week or two, Virginia dear, but my time has been so taken up assisting at births, deaths and church suppers that I was forced to give my pen a much needed rest. I am more than glad that you so enjoy hearing about all the people here for I certainly love to write about them and I do it with good



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grace for I adore writing above all things and by assuring myself repeatedly that my dear sister is lonesome away down east and her time completely taken up with her young baby, I make peace with my conscience and let many necessary things go flying while I wield my pen fast and furiously. To think that our Betsey Jane is sitting up alone! Isn't it wonderful! What an indescribable joy a baby is anyway and how momentous every little milestone along the way. The first smile, the first tooth, the first step and the first word! O, that first smile, that *knowing* smile that a baby gives to it's mother alone! If I live to be a hundred I will never forget the smile that Nancy smiled at me when she realized for the first time that I was her mother and therefore entirely different and apart from every other human being in the world.

We've had a series of wonderful mellow days but this morning the sky presented a leaden and grief-stricken face to our disappointed vision and has wept copiously for hours.

Nancy and Phil just revel in this country life and atmosphere and are perfect roly-polys and happy as larks all day long. Kate Watson calls them the "Campbell Kids" and they shriek with delight at the appellation and certainly look the part.

Our church supper was *not* a success from a financial point of view but was decidedly so as a vaudeville performance. So few attend as a rule that many women who had half promised donations didn't send them, thinking that, as usual, the supply would greatly exceed the demand. But, my word, Virginia, the people came in droves — they approached on horse-back, in carriages and in automobiles, an unprecedented occurrence in the annals of the church. They hustled in and began taking their places at the long tables and we of the provision committee almost gave up the ghost for there were lots of strangers who had come over from their lake shore homes for a final frolic before going back to town.

"Heavens above, girls," shrieked Rosamond Thornton, "the woods are full of them, and still they come, what on earth are we going to do?" and she hastily scanned the meagre array of baked beans, cold meat and potato salad with a wild look in her eye.

"Do?" echoed Mrs. Edwards, the ruling spirit, "we're going to feed them, of course, that's what we're here for."



Rita," she commanded to the pretty Marston girl who, in fluffy gown and apron, stood ready to serve the multitude. "Rita, I appoint you chairman of the looting committee and do you go out this minute and see what you can collect in the way of cooked food from the neighbors' dinner tables—go in and get some of the men to help you and take anything that's ready to serve—hurry!"

Margarita, with Garry and Bob Thornton in her wake, dashed out the door to do her superior's bidding while we all flew about in various directions, praying that the parishioners had been well fed before they came.

"Keep them talking in there, girls," ordered the portly Mrs. Walton, "and couldn't somebody play or sing or do something to keep them amused while we portion out the food?"

Rachel and Martin Brinkerhoff rose to the occasion and took turns dashing off divers popular airs on the unspeakable square piano.

"I knew there was some good reason for my wanting Rachel to come," I said to Garry, who entered bearing aloft a large tray of appetizing food, secured from neighboring larders, "just hear her playing 'Glow Worm' in there; you can fairly see the little lights gleaming and sparkling in the darkness; when Rachel plays, even on that awful piano, people don't care if they never eat again, they are so entranced."

Well, talk about the miracle of the loaves and fishes—it wasn't a circumstance to this. We seemed to evolve food out of the infinite and everybody had more than enough. Garry and Bob had us in a perfect gale of merriment recounting the manner in which they begged food from the various houses; but everybody, regardless of creed, entered into the spirit of the thing and came to the front with ready relief, another proof of Stormfield's abounding friendship.

"The booming committee certainly did their duty with a vengeance," remarked Rosamond, filling a tray for the fifty-seventh time.

"Yes, not wisely but too well," said Rita, "I'm ready to drop in my tracks this minute."

It turned out all right anyway and none of the strangers will ever be the wiser probably, although I heard one man ask if they had a separate menu for each one. Variety was the word, believe me!



## A BIT O' SILENCE

The people out here think I'm queer because I don't go into town oftener but I can't see the point in trapesing in every week or so when I have a perfectly good husband to do my errands for me and really Garry is developing into a most remarkable shopper and fairly haunts the bargain counters. He would be wild if he heard me say that but what he doesn't know won't hurt him so never mind.

I must tell you of the Maddigan funeral for it was in a class by itself. I'm sure that I have often mentioned Mrs. Barney, my laundress, she of the avoirdupois, you know, and who thinks that Mrs. Garrett Van Clief is the Alpha and Omega and everything in between. Last Monday her poor old bed-ridden mother was gathered to her fathers and Mrs. Barney, with a tearful but triumphant note in her voice, told me that I was to be honored to the extent of riding to the funeral on Wednesday A. M. with brother Danny in his buggy while she would accompany Jim. They are both in the neighborhood of forty and hold office in the plumbers' union. Well, my dear, of all the performances I ever took part in! I fear me that the twain had imbibed slightly before starting out to pay their last respects to their departed parent for they were in a perfect tumult of gaiety through which a riotous streak of recklessness seemed to filter. Virginia, they *raced* to the cemetery and Danny was consumed with fear that Jim would head him off and could hardly be induced to go into the little German church for the services. I persuaded him to do so, however, assuring him that he would regret his action later if he failed to do so, and he unwillingly dragged his halting steps up the aisle, his furtive glance on Jim every second. The moment the services were over Dan dashed up the aisle dragging me with him and into the buggy we hopped and fairly flew to the graveyard, Jim lashing his horse close behind us and poor grief-stricken Mrs. Barney clutching her bonnet with both hands. I was perfectly hysterical through it all and frightened nearly out of my senses. Danny won as he was bound he would and cast a series of triumphant glances at his crestfallen brother, who says he is determined to be the victor at the next obsequies. I didn't get over it all day and Garry says firmly that that will be about all in the line of sharing my employees' grief for awhile.



Oct. 3.

It is late afternoon and I have just come from Anne's where I found the polly's cage covered up, the dogs cowering before the fire, the Billiken with his face to the wall and Anne physically exhausted for she's been through a lot this morning and it has rained cats and dogs since dawn.

"Nancy," she said, when I was leaving, "if you should happen to meet any callers headed this way tell them I'm dead—will you—say I passed on about an hour ago, the undertaker's here now, and there is nothing they can do."

It seems that there is a brute of a man down on the Lake Road who beats his children unmercifully and has broken the arm of one and a leg of another throwing them around while his wife and the neighbors are in such deadly terror of him that they don't dare tell or call upon anyone for assistance. However, the awful state of affairs leaked out somehow but the men of the town and an officer of the S. P. C. C. from the city didn't seem able to remedy matters materially. As usual, it remained for our Anne to beard the lion in his den and lay down the law. She said he fairly cowered before her and promised to turn over a new leaf in the future but she has her doubts. She managed to get a physician to care for the children but the little girl will be lame for life. Think of it, Virginia! And the hopeless part of it is that he is not a drinking man at all—just a great big vicious creature who vents his ugly temper upon his helpless babies. We are going to hold an indignation meeting at Anne's tonight and see what can be done. Anne certainly has the courage of her convictions and wins out every time and is without a doubt one of the most remarkable human beings I ever met. She wears loads of rings sometimes and the effect is bizarre and odd but suits her down to the ground; an old Egyptian scarab, some wierd Roman affairs and queer dangly things; she doesn't always wear her wedding ring for she says she gets awfully tired of being married to the same man all the time and likes to forget it sometimes. We take those remarks with many grains of salt, however, for she and Dick are the most devoted creatures imaginable. She has imbued her home with her personality also to the fullest extent and it is like no other house in Stormfield. One entire wall of her library is covered with framed photographs of her friends—her rogues gallery, as she calls it—the latest acquisition being a group of the VanClief family. I hate groups as a rule but the



## A BIT O' SILENCE

new one of us is exceedingly artistic and Anne insisted upon adding it to her collection. I am mailing you one today.

Nancy has been standing at the window for some time waiting for the sun to appear and she just called out, "O, Buddie, come and look at the birds flying around in *our* air."

It's amusing and at the same time beautiful the way everyone calls upon Anne for everything. If anyone needs help, sympathy or advice they turn to Anne and she's always ready with a helping hand, a loving word or a hearty grip of congratulation, as the case may be. Why, the other day when I was there the station master called up to say that there was a *panther* at the depot in a cage and it needed food and water and would she please come and attend to it. Remington, her youngest, was demanding his luncheon at the same moment but was told to wait while she went to the assistance of the poor beast.

"Nancy, I actually believe there are people in the world who think that a panther has no soul," she declared disgustingly as she flew out of the door in the direction of the station. There isn't anything that she hasn't done or couldn't do—her versatility is stupendous. I am so anxious to have you meet her and also Dick and their four lovely children—not to mention all the other dear people—and as for Rachel—really I can hardly wait for spring when you say you will come.

Shirley Tennant is a perfect flower in looks and disposition. Anne says that Shirley has never required one word of correction in her life.

I came across a beautiful thing today that I have never happened to find before and Anne's name seemed to stand out clearly as I read the lines;

"What is the secret of your life?" asked Mrs. Browning of Charles Kingsley, "tell me, that I may make mine beautiful too." He replied, "I had a friend."

How many lives have been made fuller and more beautiful because of Anne's whole-hearted friendship!

Oct. 16.

"This is the strenuous life for fair!" remarked Garry last night, or rather, this morning, as we toiled up the steps after returning from a bridge party at the Thorntons' and really, we have been circling about in the social whirl until we're fairly dizzy. Rachel's party was night before last and



as she couldn't attempt much in that shack, she didn't try any conventional stunts but certainly made things interesting. It was a perfect night—"October's bright blue weather"—with a soft, balmy breeze and as we went through the woods, the harvest moon came up over the tree tops in a yellow blaze of glory that fairly took one's breath away. Rachel had decorated the living room with little bent witches, black cats and brownies and Mephistopheles himself leered at us from the chimney-piece in a most uncanny fashion; the only light came from candles set in huge pumpkins which added to the eerie effect in a most fascinating manner. The first thing on the program was a peanut hunt and we were warned not to eat the peanuts as we would find a use for them later. Bruce and Patty found the most and were perfect pigs and I discovered Anne and Garry dividing up so each would have an equal amount. Jack Colt remembered that he had a bag of stale ones in his raincoat pocket and wanted to get them to help swell his meagre supply but his conscientious little wife drew the line at that. We did the craziest things all evening—played "follow-the-leader" all through the woods and paddled around the pond in Rachel's canoe in the moonlight. Verily "there was a sound of revelry by night" and the leaves and branches seemed to twitter and shake as if in perfect sympathy with our merry mood. Bruce and Gilbertine were the only dignified beings present and played double Canfield in a corner on the floor for hours. I honestly think that he is terribly interested in her and that his seeming passion for Rachel is simply the infatuation of a very young man for an older woman—they all pass through that stage, you know; why a certain dear boy was madly in love with me two years ago but came through it with flying colors and we've laughed about it many times since. Garry says I'm wrong about Bruce and that he is more than infatuated with the mysterious Mrs. Bradley, but we'll see.

Ned Vale and Kate Watson ran a Marathon around the pond and Kate lost a perfectly good French heeled slipper on the home stretch but recovered it later after Bob Thornton had persuaded every one of the girls to try it on, Cinderella fashion, saying that he was looking for a fitting mate with whom to share his name and fortune as Rosamond's endearing young charms were swiftly fading. When Melia pronounced the magic word "supper," we were conducted to the



## A BIT O' SILENCE

little kitchen which was the cunningest thing I ever saw; they had it arranged like a little lunch-shop, two long counters covered with oilcloth and Melia and Rachel and Patty in white chefs' caps and aprons *sold* the food for which we paid in peanuts, each one representing a penny. All around the room were signs—(I knew then why Garry and Bruce sneaked off to Lotus Cottage Monday night with pens and card-board and India ink)—telling us to “come early and avoid the rush” and “The Lord helps those who help themselves,” etc. Also,

Coffee, 5 cents. Doughnuts, 2 cents. Pie, 5 cents. Cider, 3 cents. Hot Dogs, 2 cents. Cookies, 2 cents. Sandwiches, 5 cents, and so forth, and really, of all the howling and shrieking and grabbing I ever saw that was the worst! Such fun and such good food! Grand pumpkin pie and home-made cookies and fried cakes. We ate with our fingers and helped ourselves to everything in sight.

“That was the most unkindest cut of all”, remarked Bruce mournfully as Garry sliced off nearly the whole of the last pumpkin pie, leaving but a tiny slim for him.

“I know it, Mac,” mumbled my gluttonous husband with his mouth full, “but, honest to goodness, this is *almost* as good as Grandmother’s.”

“Nancy, how do you stand that continual harping of Garry’s on the excellence of his grandmother’s cooking?” asked Kate, “it would drive me to distraction.”

“Well, I don’t exactly dote on it,” I answered; “you know, when we were married, Mother Van told me that I would never be annoyed by hearing Garry rave about the things that ‘mother used to make’ for she always loathed the kitchen end of housekeeping and kept well away from it, so I smiled serenely, never dreaming that Grandmother Burwell’s culinary triumphs were going to be hurled at me day and night; but really, girls,” I concluded, “when it comes to anything in the cooking line, she certainly takes the cake.”

“And makes it, too,” was Garry’s parting shot and I had to grin and bear it.

I thought it dear of Rachel to do all that for us, for while she apparently enters into everything with zest and interest, in reality her heart is as heavy as lead and in spirit she’s a thousand miles away from us all every hour of the day and night. We must certainly all do our best to make things pleasant and cheerful for her if we can. After supper Mar-



cia Norrington read our palms and told our fortunes with wonderful cards by the light of the big gold moon; she's a perfect wizard at it and makes you feel all creepy and curly inside. She told me that I was going to be the cause of an international scandal, and the excitement was intense. A German Prince is to come over and fall before my manifold charms and I'm going to desert my family and flee with him. She assured me that he will have boundless wealth and an incurable disease and that I can go back to husband after the death of affinity with the money in huge sacks. I told her that the financial part of the thing appealed to me strongly and that I knew that Garry would welcome his prodigal spouse with open arms if accompanied by a large enough roll of greenbacks but that unless she could make the Prince Italian or French I'd have to decline with thanks as I never could stand for the blonde mustache with long curling, waxed ends that was inevitable where a German Prince was concerned. Rachel sang for us before we left and I'll never forget it—such a voice! She certainly has *lived* and loved and suffered and is a wife and a *mother*, I am sure.

Do you remember how Madame Shuman-Heink answered the man who brought his promising pupil to her for her verdict?

"Cannot she sing?" he asked with pride as the woman finished warbling her song in a perfectly trained and modulated voice.

"Yes, she can sing," answered the marvelous Shuman-Heink, "she can *sing*, but she has no soul; *I think* she has no babies."

Oct. 24.

My birthday! Verily, I'm getting on in the world and before many more years I will be thirty; however, I haven't the slightest intention of ever being one day over eighteen as regards feelings and enthusiasm so what difference will a few birthdays more or less make? Many thanks for the silk stockings which came yesterday, together with some from Loring and a box of the same from Dad—I'm getting the family well trained in regard to suitable gifts, I see. Tonight is the harvest festival at Fenway Farm and I know we will have a beautiful time. It's the annual party that Roberta and Ed give every fall and no one ever stays away unless they are unfortunate enough to have missed out on the invitations, have not been sufficiently urged or properly approached, in other words. I shall wear my white liberty



## A BIT O' SILENCE

satin with the rose point, and we are all going to powder our hair. Rachel has consented to go and is coming here to dinner first—I have asked Bruce McCrea too, because I like even numbers, don't you know. Rachel went to town the other day to buy something suitable to wear for she has nothing in her wardrobe that seemed quite grand enough to her, we have all talked so much about it.

Natalie and Élise are back in town and came out yesterday. I took them up to Rachel's and they were charmed with her as I knew they would be, in spite of the fact that it was one of her bitter days—as I call them; she gets moody and cynical and bitter once in a while and the stubborn side of her disposition is the dominant note. Natalie said she thought it so remarkable that Rachel and I knew each other so well and were such fast friends in so short a time. Un-seeing creature! As if time has anything to do with it—it's simply mental telepathy and the call of one soul to another and neither time nor season has any influence upon it. It's one of those instantaneous enlightening visions into another's soul that frequently occur and are all as much a part of the universal plan as the setting of the sun. You know, so many believe that love is merely a matter of propinquity and that two people who are constantly thrown together must necessarily become interested in each other and, if they are of different sex, the interest invariably leads to deeper things. Now I can't see it that way at all; I think that it's a subtle and unseen sympathy that draws people together and that environment has nothing to do with it. I could live in the same house for years with some people and not even know they were there (nor would they be aware of my presence, most likely) for it's all temperamental and we simply can't force ourselves to care for people. I remember hearing someone say years ago—in speaking of cousin Blanche—"One could know Mrs. Alden very well for twenty years and yet never get beyond that smile of hers."

Rosamond ran in and lunched with me yesterday, and we talked of scarcely anything but the bright sayings of our hopefuls—a little way that mothers have, you know.

"But the most amusing thing that Bobbie has said in many a day," remarked his fond parent, breaking into my monologue by main force, "was his answer to my query, when he returned from Sunday school last Sunday; though Bob and I are not of the large persuasion of 'Xtian Scientists' ", she



said, "our offspring have imbibed the spirit of the thing from hearing it discussed and seeing it practiced by Frances, Kate and Roberta, and have a right neat idea of it. 'What was the golden text, Precious?' I asked my Angel Child, as I removed his hat and kissed his freckled face. Bobbie looked perplexed for a brief second, then his brow cleared, 'O, I remember,' he answered, in his cunning drawl, 'it was "Onward Christian Science" and we sang it like a song.' "

We are planning to go into town to Toots Presby's wedding Saturday night; it seems like an awful effort to me but Garry is an old friend of Lee's and then we'll have the joy of staying at Aunt Charlotte's all night. You know Toots has often said that three things that do *not* appeal to her are babies, flowers and music! Charming wife she'll make for Leland, will she not? Yes, she will not.

Sylvia Eastman, a niece of Kate Watson's has come to stay with them for an indefinite period; she's a dainty little brunette and has more attention already than most girls have in three seasons. Apropos of nothing, I have a new black velvet dress that's simply howling—mother donated the material and I made the dress, as usual. Rip Van Winkle was a lucky man but not half as lucky as Garry. Really, he has never seen a dress-maker's bill I am certain. But he says I've got to stop this outshining Paquin or people will think he's been robbing a bank or something but everybody knows how accomplished I am so it's all right. There is nothing like having a good opinion of one's self is there? But it's the only thing I can do, really; I can't play the piano or do any parlor tricks at all and last night I felt my shortcomings keenly for Anne and Dick were here and I was trying to be entertaining.

"For Heaven's sake, Nancy, if you love me stop that drumming," shrieked Garry with his fingers in his ears, "as long as you can't play please don't make such a painful effort."

Patty has taught me one little piece and I adore playing it. I was much hurt but discontinued and a moment later burst into song.

"Another spasm," said Garry, resignedly. "Nancy, you have the sort of voice described by the man at Shea's last week—'sounds as though it had been sent for and couldn't come.' "



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Sweet of him, wasn't it—particularly as Bruce and Lennie were even then in the doorway. However, that being my husband's idea of wit, I will have to make the best of it.

Norah has been away for a week and I divide my time between the kitchen, dish pan and carpet sweeper. I expect her back this evening and will welcome her with open arms.

I must now go down and evolve some lunch out of the infinite for the children are clamoring for food like veritable starving Cubans.

*Later.* Have just time for a concluding line before dressing for the party. Such a night! Not warm but clear and sparkling and full of strange, crackly sounds that make one think of spooks and elves and fairies. I love that thought of Barrie's—"When the first baby laughed for the first time, his laugh broke into a million pieces and they all went skipping about—that was the beginning of fairies."

I ran up to Esther Lane's after dinner to tell her that we would call for her and I hated to come into the house and put my mind on such prosaic things as clothes. I love the night always, for that matter. There's such a soothing balm about the darkness, when the day's candles are out and everything is soft and mysterious and full of magic and little gleaming lights. Kipling is my favorite poet, but I consider Longfellow's "Hymn to the Night" the most exquisitely harmonious thing ever written. Just to think of hearing "the trailing garments of the night" fills one with a calm happiness and it is so comforting to know that no matter what we may have had to contend with during the relentless light of day, the wonderful darkness is coming to enwrap us in its protecting mantle. In truth, with the coming of night, our manifold cares do "fold their tents like the Arabs and as silently steal away."

Oct. 26.

Today is Garry's birthday, you know, and we had our usual celebration yesterday, the day between the two anniversaries. I gave him a beautiful Cluny lace center piece that will look stunning on the dining room table and he gave me a very handsome Meerschaum pipe in a nifty little case and then we traded presents—Isn't that a unique idea?

The harvest party at Fenway was a howling success and artistic in every detail. Picture to yourself an immense room with low raftered ceiling, a roaring fire of logs in the



big brick fireplace, old brass and mahogany shining in the candle and firelight and festoons of wheat sheaves and pumpkin leaves hanging on the walls and you have the setting in which Roberta and Ed, dressed as George and Martha Washington, greeted their delighted guests, while all the servants, with blacked faces, striped dresses and bandana turbans, flitted about seeing to our every comfort. Jean Carson was lovely in pale green chiffon with violets while Rachel was exquisite in yellow crepe de chine with orchids—sent by *Bruce*. I had never thought of Rachel as being really beautiful before but she certainly was Thursday night. Around her dark head she had twined a soft coil of yellow chiffon and her eyes were like stars. Sylvia Eastman was a poem in a little pink dancing frock and two sweeter girls than Patty and Gilbertine I never saw. Anne wore her one Paris gown and the men were all attired in “the conventional black.” Garry is so stunning in his evening clothes—in fact, all men look one hundred per cent. better in them and *will you tell me* why they object so strenuously to donning the same? The average man couldn't make more of a fuss if he were being dragged to the electric chair. I cannot understand it for you would think that their unfailing conceit would win the day but it doesn't in this case. I tell Garry to say nothing but pretend that we always dress for dinner and really I would heartily endorse doing so if he wasn't always so tired at night. It's one of the few things I do insist upon, however, on all state occasions. How would the men like it, think you, if, after asking the girls and women to a dance or party, the latter appeared in the little gingham dresses they had worn all day? Chagrined, to say the least. I do think that we always ought to compliment our hostess by looking as well as possible for if *we* don't care how we look, there are others who do.

“My stars, but everyone is *drunken* dressed up or ‘dressed and drunk up,’ as your Phil says,” remarked Bruce to me. “Do you know, Nan, I'm mighty glad I wore these open face clothes? I wasn't going to at first but something gave me the inspiration.”

“Well, you'll wear them first, last and all the time when you are out with me in the evening,” I stated sharply and all the boys roared, for they simply adore getting me started on the subject.



## A BIT O' SILENCE

There was music and dancing, and bridge, and the realest food I ever saw, in immense quantities—a regular country supper.

Dick Tennant and I gave our interpretation of a Spanish scarf dance—(I in white satin, entraine)—for the delectation of those who weren't glued to the card tables.

"For pity's sake, Anne, look at your Christian husband cavorting about with Nancy VanClief," called Rosamond, who happened to be dummy at a bridge table just then, "you'll have to annihilate the woman."

"Go thither and get the female imposter, boys," said Anne, "and cast her over the brink of the chasm—she will contaminate my beautiful soul-mate with her snake-like wiles."

The jury returned a verdict of "no cause of action," however, and we continued our wild romp.

Rachel seemed to enjoy herself but looked very sad and thoughtful all evening though she stayed until we all went so as not to break up the party. I induced her to stay here for the night for it seemed hopeless to try to penetrate that forest at 3:30 A. M. Bruce hovered about her all evening and hung on her every word. Once during the evening, when he had an opportunity, he asked me if I believed in continuing an engagement of long standing if a man found that the girl in the case was no longer first in his affections and if I thought that there was such a thing as platonic relationship. I replied to question No. 1 that it was most unfair for any man to allow a girl to remain engaged to him if he no longer "loved" her devotedly and if there was the slightest doubt in his mind whether he did or not—why the question answered itself—for a man who truly loves a girl or a girl who truly loves a man doesn't have to waste any time or thought on the subject.

To question No. 2 I answered that there was no such thing as platonic friendship and if two people considered that such a thing existed between them why either one or both could not be human. I concluded by telling him to go directly home from the party and take a large dose of quinine as his conversation savored strongly of the grippe. O, dear, I hope nothing tragic will come of all this—I know Rachel has a husband, I'm sure of it, and I also know that she loves him and is eating her heart to see him but she's the kind that will never show the white feather but will fight it out to the bitter end.



"It's nothing short of criminal, Ed, for us to eat up all this good food," remarked Bob Thornton at supper, as he helped himself to a large slice of rocquefort, "particularly so when all this talk about the high cost of living is at its height."

"Why not use the truer version, the cost of high living," interposed Richard.

"Pray make no apologies to Ed, my dear," sniffed Rosamond, "these Lanes are perfect Rockefellers compared to the rest of us—I say—make the most of such an opportunity and devour; just hand me that forty-cent creamery, will you, Anne—that is a luxury."

"With pleasure," said Anne, "if you will kindly pass it on to my beautiful husband. 'A little butter now and then, is relished by the best of men,' she added, drily, "and the Tenants haven't seen any for weeks."

The party broke up with three cheers for our host and hostess and assurances to them both that everybody would be right on the job for the next party. I thought I'd fall asleep on the way home for I got terribly tired the day before making a dress for Beth Mills to wear and I'm not rested yet. Beth is a little Rochester girl who is visiting Gilbertine and Patty, and Anne Tennant asked me to help get something together for Beth to wear to Fenway, as she hadn't brought an evening gown with her. Beth and Patty dashed to one of our large emporiums and purchased some white mull and I worked like a slave all day Wednesday and by Thursday noon had a darling dress ready for little Rochester. However I was more than glad to do it for Anne is always doing lovely things for me and for all of us—her heart is as big as the universe, I guess—she's always doing for others and never gives a thought to herself.

*P. S.* I wish you could hear Connie Granger's laugh—'tis worth making the trip here just to hear her give vent to her mirth.

November 8.

I hate the "I told you so" kind but for once I was right. Garry and I walked up to Rachel's last evening and the night was so black that we had to carry lanterns and there was a swirling eerie wind that made me feel uncanny. While Garry and Rachel were in the kitchen making coffee, I picked up "The Luxury of Children" (it has always lain on a lower shelf of her table under some magazines) and on the fly-leaf was this inscription: "Rachel Goodwin Bradley,



## A BIT O' SILENCE

from her husband, Gerald's first birthday." I hastily replaced the book and of course said nothing to the others when they came in but what *does* it mean? I knew she was married and I now know there is a baby son, but that neither husband nor child is dead, I'm *sure*. It couldn't be a divorce, could it? O, I won't even *think* that, for she has not her child with her. No wonder she loves mine so and that she had to leave the room the other day when I read her a little thing I had written! I'll write it for you now, while I think of it:

### MY PORTION.

You who count your treasures o'er  
E're you close your eyes each night,  
And can number in your store  
Silver, gold and jewels, bright—  
You, perchance, would pity me  
Did you know what is my share;  
I need not a lock and key,  
For I have no sapphires, rare,  
No, nor pearls, nor rubies red,  
Nor rich gems of untold worth.  
God has given me instead  
More than all the wealth of Earth—  
Gifts that set my heart aw whirl  
And that bring me endless joy;  
Just a little fair-haired girl!  
And a blue-eyed laughing boy!

Well, all things come to him who waits so I suppose the solution of this will come to us in good time and Rachel will receive her reward if she deserves it, and of course she does.

I handed out a perfectly good dollar to Elizabeth Watson yesterday for a raffle ticket, notwithstanding the fact that I had many immediate uses for said dollar. But Elizabeth spoke so feelingly about the poor protege of hers who does such gorgeous Irish crochet and who needed \$25.00 so badly, and then strengthened her case so materially by waving the most exquisite round Irish lace table cloth before my dazzled eyes, that I handed over the greenback without further ado. They are going to raffle the thing at Elizabeth's next Tuesday (if the police don't interfere) and please pray that I'm the lucky one—my number is twenty-two. Garry says he hopes I get it so that we can raffle it again as we need the money. Bruce says we'll be lucky if we don't get "pinched"



but as the Stormfield police force is generally busy in a neighboring townlet on Tuesdays I'm not going to worry about *his* being present to put the lid on.

I never saw a prettier day than today. Why all the talk about *gray* November, I wonder? Out here we have had such bright sunny days all this week, the vivid coloring of sky and hills and fallen leaves being perfectly superb.

Constance Granger is positively killing; we were asked to Anne's for luncheon this noon and Connie got out of bed just in time to dress and call for me.

"You get up so beastly early always, Nancy," she said, "why are you so foolish?"

"There's nothing foolish about it," I answered, "It's a case of force—I have so much to do every day."

"I know," she agreed, "but getting up before noon makes the day so long and then how do you kill time?"

"Kill time?" I echoed, laughing, "why, my dear Connie, I've never yet seen the day that was long enough for me to accomplish all that I would like to do." And I spoke the truth. I wonder how it seems to have to kill time, don't you, Virginia?

Anne's luncheon was lovely and what do you suppose I found at my place? A large wicker basket containing fifteen separate and distinct gifts—as a reward of merit for making the dress for Beth Mills. If that wasn't just like Anne!

Grandmother Burwell actually paid us a visit last week and stayed all night. She loves our house and the whole atmosphere of the place but doesn't approve of my sanction of Woman's Suffrage. We happened to get on the subject and I was glad that Anne Tennant didn't happen in for there would have been blood shed sure. The topic veered to the "woman who toils" and Grandmother was in her element for she's strong for the men, you know, and always has been. She says she feels sure that if women were not monopolizing men's rightful places to such an extent, the great scheme of the universe would adjust itself without further ado. She says she has a deep sympathy for men in all walks of life, the many temptations and pitfalls that beset their paths being almost too much for them. She believes that a great many domestic tragedies and subsequent divorces would be averted if there were no pretty girls seated in men's offices in close proximity to them day in and day out. It's as simple as A B C she says; man at office all day—pretty girl at



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desk—man goes home to tired wife and cross children and starts out again in A M. leaving cross wife and crosser children and is greeted at office by fresh pretty girl with no cares to speak of (of course Grandmother wouldn't admit that some do support or help support large families) who smiles sweetly as he enters—Result, divorce court and alimony. Garry listened patiently until she had finished and then expressed his disgust at such a one-sided view.

"O, of course, Grandmother, if you class all men alike, why I suppose there's something in what you say but ninety-nine out of every hundred men love their wives devotedly and would be perfectly safe with ten pretty girls in their offices."

"Most certainly," agreed Grandmother, "there's safety in numbers—I am speaking of one only."

"O, well then, one," snapped Garry, shrugging his aristocratic shoulders, "but I repeat—any *decent* man is perfectly all right with the prettiest girl imaginable and the wife ought not to object."

"O, very well," said I, more out of mischief than anything else, "it's a poor rule that won't work both ways—how would you like a young and handsome man in my kitchen every day assisting me with my housework?"

Garry smiled a sickly smile and immediately suggested a game of bridge *and*, speaking of oil stoves, what do you think Anne and Kate did today? They had gone up the road several miles to take some clothes and food to some poor families and they became so cold and tired on the way back that they began scanning the horizon for a wagon of some kind in which to continue the journey home. The only thing that came along was Stormfield's one hearse returning from a funeral and as they knew the driver well they persuaded him to let them get *inside* and ride home. Kate says it will do for a dress rehearsal and that she enjoyed it immensely but Anne says that she felt awfully dead most of the time.

Nov. 14.

With barred doors and drawn shades the Watson raffle was successfully carried through yesterday and I *didn't* get the tablecloth, but I had twenty-four companions in misery who wept and wailed and gnashed their teeth while Frances Marston, the victorious holder of the winning number, waved the Irish lace dream in our faces. However, Madame Wat-



son served heavenly sandwiches and Light of Asia tea and that helped some, believe me.

The children and I spent Monday at Poplar Gate, Marcia Norrington's lovely home, and you would go wild over her old mahogany and rosewood. She has a wonderful and choice collection, and as for paintings—a real Michael Angelo, as true as I live! She is the very essence of culture and refinement and has three lovely children, Hope, the eldest daughter, being a girl after my own heart; a fresh, unassuming, genuine girl—a rare thing in this day of precocious maidenhood.

Geof and Letty Donnelly are two of the wittiest of the “stranded aristocrats” and their election dinner came off last night and was the smartest thing ever—clever signs all about and a torchlight parade around the house, everyone carrying fourth of July sparklers and all the other lights turned out. Dick made a typical campaign speech, talking for hours and saying absolutely nothing and Attorney Kauffmann made some apropos remarks that were the acme of wit. Anne said she was a militant suffragette and looked and acted the part. Garry and I must give a party soon—I'm ashamed that we haven't done so long ago.

By the way, the Stanley Newcombs have twins—they're two weeks old now and Garry heard the news in town the day they arrived, but he's a perfect sphinx, you know, and guards with greatest care all little items of interest that he unwittingly culls from time to time; sort of preserves them in alcohol, as it were, and by the time I have wormed them out of him they're old enough to vote.

I had an awful disappointment today when I learned that our adorable doctor does not dance and doesn't even want to learn. Laurie Kendricks used to be a regular belle of the ball and one could discuss all one's ailments with him to the strains of the Merry Widow waltz. I won't take Dr. Colt off my list exactly but he's dropped about one hundred pegs in my estimation.

Ethel Barton went home Sunday after spending a few days with me; she said she had a glorious time but didn't feel very well—kept insisting every five minutes that she had appendicitis but I simply wouldn't hear to such a thing and made her dash around to parties and help me sew and make the beds. She says I am a perfect Legree.



## A BIT O' SILENCE

Frances Marston has a regular tyrant in her kitchen and has been afraid to call her soul her own and yet has clung to the masterful one because she was used to her and "knew her ways" and all those other idiotic reasons that make us bow before our servants. And, by the way, what a much abused word "servant" is. I consider it a fine strong word with a fine strong meaning. But the worm has turned at last and Frances has asserted herself and informed the slave-driver that they will make an attempt, at least, to get along without her in the future.

Garry and I were there for dinner Monday evening and when we had arrived at the coffee and repartee, a frightful crash from the pantry made us all leap from our chairs while Frances dashed out to investigate.

"O, Barbara," we heard her cry, "what have you done? That pitcher was the joy of my life and I counted it one of my dearest treasures. It belonged to my great-grandmother and has been in the family for generations."

"Time it was broke, then," growled Barbara, turning on her heel, while we all had hard work to keep serene. Then and there Frances, goaded on by the loss of her heirloom, had it out with the tyrant who coolly replied that she was intending to leave anyway and would take a place this time where "the folks was up-to-date in their dishware."

"Dear me, I hope I won't regret dismissing her," Frances panted as she reseated herself at the table, "'a bird in the hand,' you know—"

"Yes, we know," remarked Hobart dryly, "but birds of this particular feather are much better off in the bush—to the tall timbers with Barb, say I."

Gilbertine, Patty, Howard Brooks and Sliv Chaddock are coming to dinner tonight, it being Patty's nineteenth birthday. I'll telephone Bruce and Rachel and we can have two tables of bridge. Patty is as pretty as a picture these days while Gilbertine always looks as if she had just stepped out of a handbox; she's a typical tailor-made girl and is always exquisitely neat and well groomed. I see Anne approaching, spring-like and jaunty, in spite of the slushy snow—yes, snow; it began last night and has kept up all day, but it isn't the kind that lasts.

The children, particularly Nancy, are getting very conscious and it worries me not a little. A little while ago, Nancy came up to my desk and said, "Mother, be sure to



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tell Aunt Virginia that cute thing I said yesterday. And I sat there when I said it." she added, pointing out to Phil the exact spot.

I'd like to stay up here in my comfortable room and read up for the "Metaphiz" meeting but must go down, for dear old Anne has been there some moments and Mrs. Larrabee is even now ascending the steps. Anne dislikes her intensely—says she is a cross between a Christian Scientist and a dope fiend.

O, I forgot, the Newcomb twins are boy and girl; isn't it nice?

NOVEMBER 24.

Our Metaphysical meeting at Fenway Farm this afternoon was extremely interesting, and funny also, for we would interrupt every minute to discuss things. Letty Donnelly read aloud from the "Ministry of Beauty" and we challenged every statement the Kirkham man made. Kate Watson said she'd been jamming and damning until she was fit for her bed only but she'd managed to toddle up there just the same. She does make the most delicious jams and marmalades and is so young looking that it is hard to believe that she is the tall Gilbertine's mother. Kate lives her life according to the principle of non-resistance and she certainly deserves a lot of credit for it is really a much more difficult proceeding than the aggressive, "beat your way" stand that most of us take.

I, myself, do not agree with friend Kirkham on all points, particularly where he speaks of freedom from things material; really that makes me tired. It's largely temperamental anyway, and I fail to see the beauty or freedom in going without things if one doesn't have to. I've had to go without so many things in my life that I'll take all that come my way and hang on to them like grim death.

Marion Winter (she's very quiet but awfully bright and lives across from Anne) told of a fine man whom she knew who was perfectly happy if he had three square meals a day and a bed at night and believed that everyone should live on that principle and desire nothing more. Perfect rot, I think; I'll wager that the man in question has something very vital lacking in his make-up. And then there's a vast difference between being contented and satisfied, you know, I, for instance, being perfectly contented but not absolutely satisfied, by any means.



## A BIT O' SILENCE

Roberta holds that beauty is positively essential to a full and completely rounded life, beauty in every form and phase being one of the every day necessities, and I thoroughly agree with her. Letty agrees to a certain extent and admits that ugliness is a sin unless it is beyond help but says that in her opinion the smartest thing on this planet is to acquire the gift of elimination and there's a wealth of meaning in the thought. But when all is said and done, Virginia, the meaning that life's gifts have for us and the value that we, individually, place upon them, is the only thing that counts and although we have to take things as they come (and you can't get around the fact that we do), there are a great many ways of taking them, for really the key to the whole big situation lies in the point of view.

“Daughters of Time, the hypocrite days,  
Muffled and dumb, like barefoot dervishes,  
And marching single, in an endless file,  
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.”

Anne has such beautiful ideas about things and her insight into human nature is marvelous, while her whole personality expresses the spirit of giving. She never dreams of making a gift that does not mean something to her or that she does not want herself and she gives of herself freely with everything and with her boundless tact and understanding makes even her acts of charity an artistic triumph. And through it all runs a deep vein of humor which, added to her wit and cleverness, gives the necessary leavening touch.

Rachel had come up with Rosamond but didn't voice any sentiments, much to my disappointment, for she has most interesting ideas on every subject within the range of the average human intelligence.

The snow is all gone again and the walk along the bluff on the old Indian trail was delightful—the path starts at the corner of Buttercup Cottage and goes directly past Fenway Farm.

Richard Tennant said last night that he considers courage the biggest thing in the category of human characteristics—not physical bravery, by any means, but a mental strength that will bring one triumphantly through the inevitable trials and troubles of our daily life. Garry said that the whole proposition was simply a question of having sufficient nerve to bluff the other fellow into thinking you're



smart, but that cynical and pessimistic side that he sometimes reveals is all put on, I know. But he really was funny at dinner tonight and I laughed for an hour. Lee Spaulding had been in the office this morning describing his new six-cylinder car and then Burt Williams invited him to lunch at the Iroquois and spent the whole time discoursing upon the itinerary for their trip abroad this winter and consequently Garry felt rather small and poverty-stricken by the time he reached home this evening.

"Well," he said, pathetically, as he was describing the boundless riches of his friends, "the Bible tells us to be in the world but not of it, but I guess I'm of the world but not 'in it.'"

I almost choked on a large slice of pineapple for Garry unconsciously says the drollest things at times. But I arose to the occasion with promptitude.

"O, don't talk like that, Garry dear," I protested, "you must not hold such thought—don't even *think* for a moment that you're not going to get to the top of the ladder for if you allow yourself to do so, you'll surely be down and out. You know Roberta says that it's our 'bad thinks' that bring most of our troubles upon us."

"That's all very well for Roberta and the others that are roosting in million dollar coops, but I can't see it that way. Thinks or no thinks, we get all that's coming to us in the way of bumps and knocks, some of us more than our share."

"Don't, Garry, please," I pleaded, "you are simply rebelling at fate because some of your friends have a few more luxuries than you have—you, with your two beautiful children and dear little home and a wife who adores you and perfect health and a million other things—I'm ashamed of you!"

"And I'm ashamed of myself, dearest," acknowledged Garry, "and I didn't really mean it, you know, not for a minute. Still," he concluded, resignedly, a few moments later, "the fact remains, my darling, that 'them that has, gits.'"

December 12.

I have warned Norah that I will be most disagreeable until next spring and she may leave if she wishes, for really this process of bundling children up in winter is absolutely ruinous to the most placid disposition. They express a desire to go out and then before you have recovered from the effort of robing them in a hundred and one garments they



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want to come in again and hardly are their outside garments peeled off before they again feel the call of the out of doors. Of course I don't humor my offspring every time, by any means, but it's a discouraging business, just the same.

I've rather neglected you of late, I know, and I feel very guilty when I gaze at your numerous billet doux but I've had such quantities of sewing on hand and seem to belong to so many things and then I had to write a paper for our literary society. O, yes, I do belong to a literary society and I 'writ' a paper, too, as Phil says. I was keeping it dark but open confession is good for the soul and you may as well know the worst. My literary efforts took the form of a dissertation on the immortal Beatrice and it wasn't bad, either, if I do say it 'as shouldn't.' Nancy has been much impressed by the literary and intellectual atmosphere in which we have all been steeped and a few days ago asked my permission to invite some children in for the purpose of forming a reading club. (She already belongs to a sewing society, at 7!)

"But do you think, dear," I asked, "that you could interest your little friends in such things? They would much rather be out of doors playing, I am sure."

"But," she protested, "they're so stupid, all of them; why, mother, Pinkey Tompkins has never even heard of Dante!"

She is a perfect Atlas, you know, and has the cares of the world on her shoulders, but it would take many Nancys to make a literary light out of said Pinkey, I'm afraid; his face is as round as an apple and absolutely devoid of expression and at first glance you can't tell whether he's going or coming and his mentality is on a par with his physical appearance. Of course, it goes without saying that all the other children in the neighborhood carry well-thumbed Brownings with them day and night.

We all went in to Grandma Burwell's for Thanksgiving dinner and succeeded in making a four dollar turkey look like thirty cents.

The telephone just rang and, my dear, it was Natalie Barton, in town, saying that Ethel had been operated upon for appendicitis yesterday but was getting along fairly well. I am overcome with remorse and shall have Garry send a van load of flowers and fruit out to the hospital tomorrow.



We can let the doctor's bill wait, if necessary; and, just here, why do people always keep doctors waiting longer for their money than anybody else, as if they never needed food or clothes or any of the necessities of life, I wonder? But I simply must atone for my lack of sympathy and understanding. I never thought for a moment that Ethel really meant it.

This is a perfect Christmas card day, the snow a shimmering mass of sparkling crystals and the sun a ball of fiery gold in the sky—I never saw so much snow so early in the season.

Last night we "bridged" it at Marion Winter's and during supper the conversation turned on early rising and all that pertains thereto. I thought of you and your decided views on the subject and aired some of them together with a few of my own. It's amazing Virginia, the number of otherwise discerning and intelligent women who breakfast in bed. I gave as my opinion that illness and old age are the only valid excuses for such a practice and they all leapt upon me, figuratively, and abused me roundly.

"Well," I said, "I've been married a great many years (broad grins from the audience) and my husband has never yet had to eat his breakfast without me, save when a trained nurse has been at the helm."

"I always love a *cheerful* liar, anyway, don't you, girls?" remarked Rosamond, adding that she thought it was much smarter to lie back among the pillows and be lazy as long as possible.

"What about it, Garry?" asked Dick Tennant, "is that diminutive wife of yours telling the plain, unvarnished truth? Her looks belie her words, I greatly fear."

"O, you can't prove anything by me, fellows," said the unkind Garret, "I have breakfasted for years with the Morning Record opposite me and I've always supposed that Nan was behind it for I've seen it move occasionally, but I've never been absolutely certain—"

"Viper," I said, crushed to earth, "poisonous reptile, hereafter I'll take life easier and not concern myself in the least as to whether you're making your old train or not." And I turned a wrathful back upon my life partner.

"Calm yourself, my love," said husband, "the mere suggestion of your presence was enough and I've always been more than satisfied at your early morning interest in me.





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And it's a good test, too, boys, take it from me," he concluded, turning to the others.

"You're right it is," said Bruce, "and I've always said that while some friendships might do so, not many can stand the breakfast test."

"Well, how about Sunday morning when we were out gunning and breakfasted at Lotus Cottage," asked Bob Thornton, with a twinkle in his eye—"have the lady's charms diminished to any great extent because of the meal we shared with her in the cold gray dawn?"

"O," said Bruce with an effort at nonchalance, "that's different, and, like 'the flowers that bloom in the spring, tra-la,' has nothing to do with the case," and he blushed furiously.

"By the way, The Mikado will be here next week with Fritzi Scheff as Yum Yum," announced Anne, to call our attention from Bruce's discomfiture, I knew, "and though we know it by heart, we must all go even if we sell our shoes or pawn the crown jewels to do so."

Miss Higgins came up just then and asked if any of us had been in to see Ruth St. Denis in her Hindoo dances and the talk turned upon snakes and reptiles and all phases of the lady's art. Miss Higgins is a teacher of physical culture and asthetic dancing in B.; she is boarding at Marcia's and is a charming woman of innate refinement and gentleness of bearing. She is here for the winter and of course has to go in and out every day but says that living in such an atmosphere of culture and refinement as Stormfield expresses is worth the effort. She has taken a great fancy to little me and doesn't hesitate to say so. She says that while all things else may be attractive at the moment, it is all-around capability that counts in the long run and young Mrs. Van-Clief expresses said quality to the fullest extent, added of course to her many other charming attributes. O, I don't know! Hats off to Miss Higgins! I am mentally hurling large boquets at the beautiful lady and courtesying low before her while slaves and eunuchs are dragging in whole cargoes of costly gifts from the Orient to lay at her honorable feet.

A real true compliment goes to my head like wine and gives me a new lease of life. I thoroughly believe that every one is the better for a bit of encouragement in the way of spontaneous praise once in a while and when I, with my innumerable faults, hear words of adulation bestowed upon



my unworthy self, I sit right up and take notice. Will you ever forget the night of your announcement dinner when Billy, apropos of nothing, suggested taking inventory of the various faults of the assembled company and suggesting improvements in them. You remember how we all twirled our thumbs and mentioned one or two of your faults in a weak voice and possibly three tiny ones of Billy's while no one could think of a single flaw in my jewel of a Garry. But when they came to me—ye gods and little fishes! the volley of words that shot forth rings in my ears even yet. How we all laughed! But anyway, I'm sort of a useful and necessary creature in my own little sphere and that's the essential thing, you know.

The other day at Anne's we were discussing the dearest thing in life and the biggest thing and the funniest thing and so forth and when it came to the saddest or most unbearable thing the ideas were extremely varied. Anne said that to be where there were no animals to love and care for would be the most awful state of existence she could imagine and Marcia thought that to be stranded far from any antique shops filled the bill, while Roberta gave as her opinion of sad desolation, a complete ostracism from books.

"I can't imagine anything worse than to be where you can't get olive oil for salad dressing," stated Connie, and we knew she meant it.

"Not half as bad as to be unable to get paints or stencil materials," said Esther, while Sally and Kate couldn't conceive of anything worse than a kitchenless existence for they both love to cook and fuss around stoves. Letty said that to be where people were not allowed to laugh would be the most horrible while my idea was that to be where all the people were grown up and there were no babies and where we weren't allowed to dance would be the most tragic state imaginable. Rachel sat quietly through it all and not until two or three asked for her opinion did she give it.

"There is no state of existence," she said, slowly, "quite so unbearable as to feel and know that you are no longer necessary to anyone's daily life—nothing is so terrible as that."

We immediately began talking fast and furiously and all at once about anything we could think of that was light and frothy and thereby averted a catastrophe, I'm sure.



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The Vales are in town for a few weeks but as they spend almost as much time there as here, we hardly miss them. Kiss my beloved niece for me and tell her that her Aunt Nancy loves her "forty million" as my Philip says.

Dec. 21.

At last I know what real winter is! No wonder I never liked it before, for what does one know about winter in the city, with it's neatly shoveled walks and sloppy slush and dirty brown snow! But this is something like it! A real country winter. Great mounds of fresh, fluffy snow, the roads and orchards piled high with it and the fences, posts and houses taking on all sorts of queer shapes under their burden of frothy whiteness. You go to bed at night leaving an every-day world that you are used to and you awake in the morning to find that the various familiar landmarks have taken on all sorts of weird forms. Egyptian temples, Scottish feudal halls with moat and draw bridge, and Italian palaces rear themselves out of the ground before your astonished eyes, the trees are covered with a lacy net-work that you are sure is the work of fairies and you are overcome by the elusive charm of it all. And then the silence! Really, the calm stillness casts a perfect spell over one and tired nerves and racked brains succumb instantly to it's magic influence.

You know by this time, of course, that Jim Langdon was here for over night last week and his visit had all the charm of the unexpected but was altogether too short. I am so glad that you and they live in the same city and I sometimes wish that we might all be together but I could never leave this delightful place, I'm sure. Jim assures me that our lovely cousin is as beautiful as ever; that the new son is quite as fine a baby as little Dan. Isabel's beauty is so bewitching, isn't it? That odd olive complexion, the huge gray eyes and the wonderful pale gold hair. It must be very amusing the way artists and photographers pester the life out of her for she certainly is generous enough, I'm sure.

Her absolute lack of consciousness and her happy-go-lucky way of doing things are so attractive, too, though some men would go mad with such a wife. Jimmy showed me the picture of their new bungalow at the shore and I enthused madly over everything except the way the hooded fire-place in the living room slanted directly to the ceiling.



I told Jim that I thought that the absence of a lintel-board detracted materially from the artistic effect.

"There was a method in my madness in doing away with the shelf idea," explained Jim, in that dry way of his, "for if there is no place at hand where Isabel can deposit the baby's bottle, Dan's rubber boots, a porter-house steak or the family hair brush, why they won't be there—don't you see?"

"You're a wise old owl, Jimmy boy," said Garry, "and no mistake."

Garry hasn't been feeling well and is at home today; he thinks he's in for an attack of tonsilitis—you've had it—'nuff said.

Rachel was here for dinner the night Jim came and I was so glad that he could meet her for now you will have another and unbiased opinion about my favorite.

Anne found a pitiful little kitten near the Erie Station yesterday and brought it home with her, of course. She has named it Erysipelas.

Yesterday, the mood being upon me, I sallied forth to pay my respects to Mr. and Mrs. Archibald Dill, a rather pathetic looking couple and the fond parents of a four-months old child, who have recently taken up their residence next door to Mrs. Larrabee. I was dying to see the baby at close range and was overjoyed at being requested to follow my card up to the nursery.

"I trust you will pardon me for not coming down, Mrs. Van Clief," was Mrs. Dill's apologetic greeting, "but not even the combined efforts of Archibald, Lena and myself were sufficient to get any of the other rooms up to seventy-three and one-quarter, which is the correct temperature for Archibald Junior's proper physical development, and, of course, I can't leave him an instant—do come right in and make yourself comfortable."

I did so and took a seat as close to the crib as the anxious parent would allow, she hovering about with her eagle eye upon me. One glance at Archibald, Jr., was sufficient. I saw his finish at once. At four he will be quoting entire passages from the bible, at ten, writing lengthy essays on the "Evolution of Man" and "Flora and Fauna of the Barbadoes" and will be distributing tracts in frock coat and side whiskers to benighted heathen before he is twenty-five.

"I simply adore babies," I began effusively, with a side



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glance at Archibald, "I have two of my own and wish I had several more for Nancy and Phil are almost grown up now and go out to parties and things, you know."

"Do they, indeed?" my hostess inquired, skeptically, "why you are nothing but a child yourself, from your looks."

"O, it's because I am little," I suggested, carelessly, "and then I was married at eighteen." But I was inwardly resolving that when I was a great-grandmother, I wouldn't look as ancient as Mrs. Dill did that minute if I had to have my face enameled.

"Yes, the little things *are* interesting," agreed Mrs. Dill, "but how nervous they make one, and really one can't do another thing but care for one's child, can one?"

"No, one really can't," I said politely, and wanted to add, "if one is your class" but I refrained.

Mr. Dill (he looks just like a pickle, too) had been pivoting about and finally came in and seated himself opposite me.

"May I ask what books you used in the rearing of your children, Mrs. Van Clief?" he inquired anxiously, his thumbs twirling madly and a beatific smile of interested fatherhood o'erspreading his countenance.

"Books?" I fairly screamed, "I never had one in the house—O yes, I believe a few on some wild subjects were presented to me before the stork had covered more than an hour's distance from the premises, but I hurled them in the rubbish heap with the thermometers and scales and all those other barbaric things that make the lives of young parents a perfect nightmare—mine were old-fashioned babies and I used common sense and cradle songs more than anything else."

"Do you mean to say that you rocked your infants?" they both exclaimed in one breath, "why we never think of even holding Archibald."

"O, do let me have him a minute," I implored, and suiting the action to the word, lifted the astonished Archibald out of the crib and cuddled him close while the panic-stricken parents fairly glowered at me.

It was mean of me, I know, Virginia, but this modern slaughter of the innocents makes me tired and I wanted to give the poor little thing a real old cuddle for once. At precisely seventeen minutes past three, both parents began pecking at the baby who had fallen asleep on my lap and



actually looked almost human with his little head cradled in my arm and his tiny finger curled tightly about my thumb.

"What are you doing?" I asked, rather sharply, "surely you're not going to awaken him, he's just gone asleep."

"O, but it's time for his nourishment," Mrs. Dill replied, "and we are most particular about the exact time—Archibald, will you go down and heat the food, please, and remember the formula; 3 ounces sugar of milk, 2 of barley water, 3 spoons of lime water, 4 of boiled water, 1 of top milk, 2 of cream, 3 of oatmeal gruel, 4 of Piffle's food, 3 quarters of——" But by this time I was half way down stairs assuring my hostess that I had spent a most delightful hour but had just remembered the missionary meeting at four and simply had to be there.

Wouldn't it jar you, Virginia? But what's the use of talking about it—only it makes me laugh when I think of the large sums of money being spent every year for foreign missions when there's such a field at home.

Kate Watson has the most remarkable mentality and has an abounding faith in her religious convictions. She says that of course there is enough of everything for everybody and no one need go without. She simply affirms that "Supply is Infinite" and gets what she wants every time. She has a boundless belief in an unfailing source of supply. Anne is just like her and when her big setter (that she adored) died last week, she was so disconsolate that she was unable to do a thing. She said she *must* have another dog to take King's place and would demonstrate one. Within a few hours she went to the door in answer to some pawing and scratching and there stood a big, white hound who walked in and made himself very much at home. Anne says she will adore him always for he's a gift straight from heaven if there ever was one.

The Tennant children (I say children, though they are almost grown up) have beautiful manners but have always had their ups and downs like all other normal beings and I presume, in their younger days, indulged in many a bout and not a few tongue lashings and the scientifically reared and trained Boughton children who have recently moved next door to Anne's are a constant source of amazement to them all, especially Remington. We dined there a few nights ago and observed that Tony was perturbed about something.



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"Father," he began suddenly, addressing himself to Dick, "have you ever heard the Boughton children quarrel?"

"Quarrel?" echoed Richard, "why, no, son, I don't believe I have—I really did not suppose that they ever did such an unmentionable thing."

"Well," said Remington, "it didn't *sound* exactly like quarrelling but I knew it was from the way they looked and acted. They were building a snow man and Carol said that his arms would have to be made with sticks and Dorcas didn't think so. I could see that she was awfully mad, but she just stared at Carol and said, 'Pardon me, Caroline, but you are very much mistaken, I am sure.' And Carol just stared back at her and said, 'Well, I beg your most humble pardon, Dorcas Manchester Boughton, but you are entirely wrong.' Gee whiz," he concluded with a sniff, "I'd have hauled off and given a few biffs, but I suppose well-brought-up children wouldn't know how."

"Well, preserve me from well-brought-up children, then," said Anne, "I much prefer the "biffy" kind.

"Same here," said Garry, and a chorus of "dittoes" rent the air.

Rachel was here for luncheon and is now reading Chamber's latest novel to Garry who simply can't hold his head up but won't give in and send for the doctor. I intend to, however, before very long, if he doesn't improve. I've been busy getting Christmas boxes off to our numerous relatives and will certainly give the Three Wise Men a piece of my mind if I ever meet them, for I'm worn to a frazzle.

I was holding my son on my lap last evening and embracing him madly; he's so huggable, you know, and allows me to squeeze him almost to pieces, as Nancy never would.

"O, Phil, darling," I said to him, "who ever made such a precious thing as you?"

"Do you want to know?" he asked quickly. I assured him that I did and he made answer: "Well, God said, 'Dream, mother, dream,' and then He called 'Philip, dear lamb,' and there I was." I smothered him with kisses and wonder if he is another Emerson, or what. He has three crowns on his head, so the barber discovered, and that augurs well for his future—also his rage when he tries to brush it, Garry says. Let's see, Napoleon and Abraham Lincoln had three crowns, didn't they?



Dec. 26.

Merry Christmas indeed! It was anything *but* in this house for Garry has been in bed for three days and the moaning and groaning can't be imagined—men certainly make an awful fuss when they are really sick but then, the poor boy has been very ill and tonsilitis is the extension of the limit.

And to add to the turmoil, Rachel has it, too, and I feel as if I ought to be up there with her for she got it from Garry without a doubt. Dr. Colt is a darling and has the most fascinating way of holding his head. I told Melia over the telephone that she must have him for Rachel and I could promise that she would come out all right. Rachel wanted an older man at first but I persuaded her to have our family physician and she's mighty glad she did. He is very young; just Garry's age (I saw it in the marriage license record) but I prefer the young men to the old ones—they are keener and more interested and read and study all the time while the older doctors go on their reputations, even though they were made in the dark ages.

Of course, our day wasn't absolutely dismal—people kept dashing in and out all day and the Christmas spirit was present always. Then the holly and the mistletoe and turkey and plum pudding and sleigh-bells and presents helped some. The children had their usual big tree and loads of gifts and went to bed exhausted. My share was several pairs of silk stockings and a few checks, not to mention a lapis-lazuli ring from Garry that would put your eye right out. (I forgot, Virginia—*do* forgive me). He received the usual assortment of neckties, sox and handkerchiefs from well meaning relatives and four new novels from Anne and Dick and I gave him a complete smoking set in Teco that will require strictest economy in all directions for weeks to come. The Tennant family gave me a huge book of Flagg drawings. It's stunning and the inscription went to my heart: "For our darling Nancy, from the Tennants, who love her dearly."

Garry is calling me this minute so I'll stop and finish this tomorrow for my poor boy needs me all the time.

Dec. 27. A little more light on the subject of dear Rachel. Bruce and Patty came in late yesterday afternoon and said they would stay a while with Garry so I donned rubber boots and short skirt and flew through the woods to Rachel's tiny cottage. I found her really very ill though not in any



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danger and as I sat by the bed holding her hand I couldn't help noticing around her neck a slender gold chain, on which hung a lovely wedding ring—narrow and round, and a small locket which she had evidently opened and forgotten to close. In it on one side was a picture of a most winsome child with dark eyes and curls; the other side was vacant. Rachel's lovely voice was very husky but she kept making little wandering fragmentary remarks, seemingly unconscious of my presence. "O, Philip, my dear," she would say, "can you ever forgive me and can I ever make you know again how much I love you? I can't hold out much longer, Philip, I really can't; but I will," she would add, sternly, half raising herself, "I will, for I can never forget—never, never, never—" and then, sinking back again, she murmured "but I love you, dearest, more than any woman ever loved before."

I felt like a thief in the night but what could I do? I won't tell the others, of course. And so his name is Philip—no wonder she loves my little Phil, and she pronounces the name in such a manner as to make it a caress. I didn't leave until she was sleeping peacefully and I never saw anything sweeter than her lovely face on the pillow in the dusky twilight; the dark hair forming a misty halo about her head and the long, wet lashes brushing her pale cheeks. In spite of its lines of determination, her face expresses such purity of thought in every feature. As I gazed at her lying there I couldn't help thinking of that paragraph in "Romola" where it says: "Her life could never be happy any more but it must not, could not be ignoble." But dear Rachel's life can be happy once more and is going to be, I'm sure.

Rachel's dog lay at the foot of her bed all the time I was there and kept his eagle eye upon me as if he feared I would do harm to his treasure. Most animals like me but Copper doesn't exactly approve of the way I have deposed him in his mistress' favor. When I returned I found my other invalid much improved and sitting up, eagerly discussing with Bruce and Virginia the big dance that comes off in a few weeks. Bruce says that he is going to ask Rachel to go with him, but I know she won't.

I must dash into town and purchase large quantities of pale blue chiffon with which to make an overdress for my blue messaline in veiled effect, for that's the proper caper, I believe.



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Jan. 3.

Ellis Island for us—Nancy and Phil have the measles and we are quarantined for a couple of weeks; they came in with the New Year, or rather, out, and the children look for all the world like speckled trout. You know they had whooping cough last winter and whooped until spring and we had such a pleasant time—we spent our nights leaping out of bed and dashing through cold halls to get to the babies every time they'd begin on a coughing performance and then in the intermissions we would lie awake waiting for the next cue. Finally we moved both cribs into our room and had a little taste of tenement life. We had planned to go in to hear Nordica tonight but of course have given it up and I shall sing lullabies to my babies instead and probably enjoy it just as much. I'm not at all nervous about them but will have to be very careful about their eyes, I am told.

The invalids are up and about again and feel too silly for anything to think they were so sick. Rachel is coming down this afternoon to sing and play "Drowsy Babe" for the children—they adore it and insist upon her playing it every time she comes. Isn't "Drowsy" a delicious word? It makes me think of soft, lapping water and baby owls and incense and chiffon and whipped cream.

Much as I love Christmas and the whole holiday season it is somewhat of a nervous strain and last night Garry broke forth into a perfect tirade against the whole thing, he was so tired.

"It's all nonsense," he said crossly, "perfectly flat, this giving presents you can't afford to give and getting presents that you don't want and couldn't be hired to use or wear. Everybody hurls gifts at everybody else, simply because it is the custom, and on Christmas morning, you find yourself loaded down with a miscellaneous collection of junk and riffraff. I agree with Anne who calls them 'spider's eyebrows' remarking that they are synonomous as regards suitability and serving of purpose. And in the same class" he continued, "are the 'has beens' the 'never-wuzzers' and the 'couldn't-evers' labeled 'just a loving thought' in place of 'I'm giving you this because you're on my list and so I've *got* to give you something' that ought to be there.

"I believe I'll tell Nancy and Phil the whole story before next Christmas and get them what they want a couple of



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weeks before—then they won't have the Santa Claus fever and all that tom-foolery that goes with it."

"Stop, this instant, Van," ordered Rachel, who had come in with Bruce, "I won't even allow you to think such things when I am near you—Nancy, can't you do anything with your husband?"

"Mercy, no—I gave up trying long ago," I answered. "He's perfectly hopeless."

"Well, if you want to be a cold-blooded pessimist, all right," said Rachel, addressing herself to Garry, "but for pity's sake don't destroy all the faith of those innocent children in dear old Santa Claus and fairies and myths—belief in them is half the battle of life. And do keep *your* illusions, too," she continued, appealingly, "a human being without any is so sordid and unhappy—I've always prayed that if all else were taken from me, I might be allowed to keep my illusions—it will keep you going when all else has failed you, believe me."

"Don't worry your pretty head about me, Rachel," said Garry, yawning lazily, "these ravings that I occasionally indulge in are merely letting off steam and I'm still a bit ugly from my recent attack of tonsilitis, don't you know."

"That's no excuse," stated Rachel, firmly, "I had it also and I'm as amiable as a cooing dove, and anyway, Van, it's a bad habit to get into, this ranting on in that gloomy, cynical way, for after you've allowed such thoughts to take root in your mind and emanate from your lips a few times, even in a half joking manner, they secure a firm foot-hold and gain supremacy over the brighter and more hopeful ones. Now let's talk and think of pleasant things—I suggest a game of bridge but first I want to run up and have a peep at the tattooed babies."

I never saw Rachel in a more bewitching mood than she was last night—she was perfectly irresistible, and looked very lovely in her blue velvet suit and lynx furs.

Uncle Jim Vale came in very unexpectedly about ten o'clock—he said he was in Buffalo for a few days and it was his only chance to see his favorite niece so he dashed out on the 8 o'clock train for the night. I haven't seen him for a year or so and he was a perfect treat. He says he's hard up, his silver mines aren't panning out as they should and he must have large wads of money in order to live as he likes to; he suggested getting up a new religion, said that



would make a go more quickly than anything else he could think of and he desired my co-operation. We think we will get out pamphlets first and then build a temple where he would dress in flowing robes with a high priestess by his side and expound on the vital issues of life while I could do a Salome dance outside on a platform to draw the crowds. I told him I would consider it for my costume wouldn't cost much in it's entirety—that's certain. He hasn't quite decided what he's going to do with all the money when he gets it but is considering using some of it in establishing a home for irresponsible bachelors who invest their money in silver mines. I said that if I ever had any superfluous coin I would immediately establish a permanent fund to supply full bottles of ink and some decent pens for the Stormfield postoffice and they all agreed that money could be put to no better use.

Jean Carson went home for the holidays and now writes that she is not coming back at all as she has secured a more lucrative position in New York. We'll miss her, of course, but now maybe some of the other girls will have a chance or two.

I am so distressed to know that the Camps have refused to take Bob back into their home and hearts after his unfortunate experience in the bank—I don't mind Mr. Camp's taking the stand, so much, but his mother! What can she be made of! O, these unforgiving mothers! Why, to my mind the idea of unquestioning forgiveness is the one thing that distinguishes a mother from any other woman; it's the basic principle of motherhood and one of its most sacred privileges. Any woman endowed with the ordinary five senses can wash, dress and feed a child and see to its physical well-being, but a real mother! O, Virginia! Do you remember those exquisite words in Ben Hur?—"God himself could not be everywhere, and so he made mothers." How true it is that the mere fact of having borne a child does not make a mother in the deepest sense of the word, and many women who have typified the most exquisite motherhood have lived and died old maids. Take Aunt Judith, for instance. She mothers every child that comes in the range of her acquaintanceship and there's always room in her heart for more and while Aunt Charlotte has never had any of her own, much to her keen regret, she's been a mother to many a young girl and boy who needed her. I believe



## A BIT O' SILENCE

that one of the greatest troubles is that children aren't *loved* enough; they need petting and cuddling and kissing as much as food and water. And how ridiculous this modern method of training mothers not to rock their babies! A woman or a man who has never rocked a child to sleep has missed one of life's greatest joys. Why, Garry rocked Nancy to sleep every night until she was two years old and would have continued indefinitely only that Phil appeared on the scene and made a division of time necessary. I love every stage of baby-hood and child-hood and would walk miles in rain and mud to see a tiny new one, and the true music of the spheres, I think, is exemplified in the little cooing, gurgling sounds and soft purring kitten noises that a young baby makes when it is half awake. If you ever wonder what it is all about, Virginia, what this perplexing existence means and what we are here for, just look long at your Betsey Jane when she is sleeping and you will find the answer. I have always said that one reason why so many children turn out to be a disappointment to their fathers and mothers is that the average parents expect altogether too much of their children and look upon them as a sort of investment and figure upon the returns. If they would live in the present, enjoy their children while they are young and stop worrying about the future and what the children are going to do for *them*, they would be much happier. Poor Bob, if he ever needed his mother's care and love, he needs it now indeed. I am trying to bring up Nancy and Phil to the best of my ability and I hope they will be a credit to me, but whether they are or not, I want most of all to have them *know* instinctively, that no matter what they may ever do, either through mistakes or their own blindness, their mother stands ready, with open arms, ever and always to take them in without doubt or question. I must now go and read Peter Rabbit to my polka-dotted infants.

Jan. 16.

My babies are restored to their original beauty of coloring and I am delighted. I've been rather lonesome for nobody dared come except Bruce and Rachel who paid no attention to the yellow placard. I've put in my time making some dainty lingerie and conversing with the fascinating doctor who ran in every day as a matter of course. Both



children had it pretty hard but slept a great deal of the time and were so good when awake. We left them with Norah last night to go to Dick Tennant's fancy dress party as they have been all right for several days. Anne is in town for a week and Richard had a party all his own in her absence. I went as a little school girl in short gingham dress (of Shirley Tennant's), pig-tails and sun bonnet. Garry was a perfect lout of a country-boy, Marsh Granger the most ferocious looking cannibal I ever saw and Sylvia Eastman an exquisite Dolly Varden. Esther Lane impersonated Mrs. Wiggs, while mine host was Carrie Nation and took the part to perfection. There were French chefs and trained nurses and Dutch girls and gypsies, Spanish cavaliers and little kimono ladies of Japan and a bewitching Sultan's favorite, impersonated by Roberta. She was certainly the pride of the harem for her make-up was perfect in every detail. Roberta is unusually cultured and well-read, has traveled abroad extensively and went to a finishing school in Paris, I believe. Rachel wasn't there—the fifteenth is an anniversary of some kind and she wished to be alone.

Bruce was the hit of the evening as Anna Held and devoted himself to the girls in his attractive way. I wish he would stop caring for Rachel for she doesn't know he exists half of the time; she's dear to him always but treats him as she would any nice friend. And even if circumstances were different, he's not the sort of man for her. He's a sane, well-balanced fellow but too plastic and negative, though he'll make an adorable husband for some girl, just the same. And he is a most welcome relief from the ubiquitous man (or woman) who invariably wants to run things; the kind, you know, who always wants to be "the bride at a wedding and the corpse at a funeral," as the young son of one of our great statesmen said recently, in speaking of his strenuous father.

But Rachel has a hot temper and a strong mind in spite of all her beauty of soul and she needs a mate who will take the upper hand. I hope I will meet Philip some day—I will if I have to go out and make a systematic search of the universe myself.

Rosamond was a French court lady with powdered hair and patches and pompadour satin and was dazzling in the extreme.



## A BIT O' SILENCE

"You're too beautiful for words, Rosamond," Dick said, "I am completely overcome."

"The effect *is* right neat," agreed Rosamond, "but I wish you might have seen my struggles endeavoring to arrive at the present state of completeness and I give all the credit for it to Frances. I was most peculiar as to bodice," she said, "until Frances came to the rescue with this gorgeous lace affair belonging to some ancient relative, which she cleverly draped about my portly frame with this wonderful result."

"I was quite weird as to visage," said Esther, whose round face is anything but Wiggs-like, "and had to do queer things myself to get the desired effect. Note the black court plaster on tooth; that empty looking cavern gives the finishing touch, I think."

It certainly did, we all agreed, and Bruce and Gilbertine, the latter as a Gypsy Queen, came up and joined the group.

"You're a perfect 'sylph,' Bruce, old boy," said Garry, "I congratulate you."

"Well, I ought to be," said Bruce, taking as long a breath as his armor would permit, "it took me hours to make connections in my get-up; talk about the Great Divide—it wasn't in it. Say, girls, how do you do the stunt, anyway?" he asked, with a real show of interest, "I'd like to know."

"Hush, man," said Rosamond, with an unsuccessful attempt at severity. "Come, Bob, this is no place for growing boys; I'm going to take you home."

Poor Mrs. Larrabee (Dick had to ask her) was a sight to behold, having spent hours in a fruitless endeavor to look like Helen of Troy. But she made things worse by continually harping on her failure and repeating that she "never could do anything well, anyway, and never expected to." Aren't people like that awful? I'd rather be called conceited any day than be of that ilk. I always think that I can do anything that has been done before, if need be, and I usually find that I can. A little self-assurance is a mighty good thing in this world and will get to the front every time while the self-effacing, modest violets sit disconsolately in the back row.

Mrs. Larrabee has two or three stock phrases and we all know them by heart. If people appeal to her they are invariably "so congenial, just my style, don't you know?"



while she is "simply carried away" by any event that gives her pleasure. But as Mrs. L. weighs about twelve stone, she must be equipped with a sort of mental derrick, as it were.

At this time of year our brave commuters are obliged to leave their happy homes before daylight in order to make the early train and as I don't belong to the large army of breakfasters-in-bed, I always watch Garry out of sight. Ed Lane drives down to the depot every morning in a large and copious farm sleigh and it's an amusing sight to see all the boys catch on. Ed's man purposely drives slowly and as the sleigh comes into view down the broad white road, the various doors open and the men dash out and jump on "any old way." All I can think of is a lot of flies collecting in one place but it surely is a pretty sight and the friendly "good-mornings" and "hullos" sound so cheery in the brisk morning air while the faithful old sun pokes his nose up over the Concord Hills and, throwing rays of golden light over the sparkling snow, turns darkness into day.

Loring comes the 28th and I am making out the list for the house party. Garry says he can't see where on earth I am going to put them, but leave that to me. Nothing has ever phased me yet and such a little item as putting eighteen people in a house with only five bedrooms certainly won't. Of course, I'll have to farm out the children, also Norah and probably Garry but I'm not going to worry about it anyway. Matters will adjust themselves satisfactorily, I'm sure, for they always do when I put worry on the shelf. Tomorrow night, I purpose to give my bridge party. I've asked a perfect multitude and hope that I can squeeze them all in.

Dickie and I are going coasting this afternoon at Look-out Hill, an irresistible spot not far from here and we *hope* to return intact. I am somewhat doubtful, however, as it is extremely bumpy and a large and reckless assortment of youngsters frequent the place—here comes my cavalier now, so good-bye for the present—more anon.

P. S. Later—some hours. Dickie and I *went* coasting this afternoon as per arrangement; if I am able to be about again by next summer I will be down your way. It also depends upon my regaining my natural color for at present I am a symphony in black and blue.



## A BIT O' SILENCE

Jan. 17, 2:30 A. M.

"The lights are out and gone are all the guests" and it's a good thing for such pandemonium I never saw. I drank four cups of strong coffee in my excited capacity as hostess and will never get to sleep tonight and, as I haven't a good book on hand, I may as well write to you. Garry said when I stated my intention of doing so that he always suspected I wasn't quite right in the head and now he is sure about it, but I said I never had any doubts about him as I knew it from the first, and took up my pen.

I told you I had asked everyone I knew and all accepted with pleasure. We were altogether too crowded for comfort and as they filed into the dining room, where I served a buffet supper, all I could think of was "the animals came in two by two." Constance Granger's sister, Gertrude Platt, arrived today and was a sort of guest of honor. She's a very handsome girl and plays a wonderful game of bridge. Mrs. Larrabee played her usual brilliant game and nearly drove the men to distraction. For absolute maddeningness commend me to the woman who knows nothing about bridge and doesn't even pretend to, but *will* play; the kind who trumps her partner's ace, leads from a singleton in no trump, remarks every five minutes, "Well, if you could only see my hand," and finally ends up by asking what's trump. I don't know much about the game, Goodness knows, but I make an awful bluff at it by composing my visage into bridge-like lines and making an occasional scientific remark. Whenever Mrs. Larrabee asks "O, dear, did I trump your high card?" I always have a wild desire to say "O my, no, you've just made a grand slam in doubled no trump and I'm sure you've won the prize."

When we were eating a pick-up supper in the kitchen this evening before dressing for the party, the telephone rang and Anne's voice came over the line.

"Is that you, Nancy?" she asked, in a stage whisper, "well there's an uninvited Canadian relative eating my expensive food this minute and I'll have to inflict her upon you this evening or stay at home and I'll be perfectly ferocious if I have to give up your party."

"Sort of a case of 'the lady or the tiger'," I answered, "well, make it the lady by all means and save your disposition."



## A BIT O' SILENCE

"You don't know what you're in for, though," said Anne, "she's—" she hung up the receiver abruptly and told me later that relative was even then entering the room. It was popular fiction with a vengeance when they arrived, for I told Canada I was delighted to meet her and to have her with us and Anne went the rounds introducing her *dear* cousin, Mrs. Martindale from Skintville.

She was very nice looking and could play bridge fairly well, which helped alleviate Anne's discomfiture but she didn't quite know what to make of the colony and raised her hands in holy horror when Martin and Rosamond and two or three others entered into a discussion about one or two of the recent books, and didn't mince matters but gave their straightforward opinions regarding certain issues concerning them. That finished her for me. I always fight shy of the woman who appears shocked and horrified when any vital subject is mentioned; she will bear watching, while the free and easy sort who speaks of all things naturally and as a matter of course and who can greet an unexpected man guest without blushes or embarrassment if she happens to be slightly dishabille or negligee may be depended upon to do the straight and honorable thing every time.

The sand-man seems to be coming rapidly in this direction so I'll bid you a fond farewell until morning.

January 18.

We're having perfectly radiant weather, quantities of hard-packed snow and fine sleighing. The Vales and Mars-tons have taken to snow-shoeing and I'm wild to try the sport only the floppy looking snow shoes are so expensive. Mrs. Dill has some that she doesn't use (I presume Archibald, Jr. doesn't approve)—I guess I'll cultivate her. By the way, the Dills and the Larrabees are not falling on each others' necks just now and as their friendship had reached the winter molasses stage it is most noticeable. It seems that some one told Mrs. Dill that some one told her cousin that some one told her brother's wife's sister that some one told her nephew's second wife, and so on and so forth, something that Mrs. Dill ought to know, "for her own good," and the last somebody was laboring under the impression that Mrs. Larrabee started the ball rolling. The something was a criticism as to the way the curtains were hung in the Dill living room I believe, or something of equally little importance. Consequently relations are somewhat strained



## A BIT O' SILENCE

between the houses of Dill and Larrabee for the two men are just the kind who would listen to all the pros and cons and denounce the enemy instead of saying "piffle." Poor Mrs. Larrabee puffed over here and wept all over my fresh blue linen shoulder.

"I know it's silly," she sobbed, "I never thought I'd be so idiotic but these little differences do ruffle up the daily sea of life considerably and no mistake and I never, never said it and I was getting so fond of Josepha." Another cloud-burst.

"I just wouldn't think about it at all," I comforted her, "it will all blow over before long, probably, and if it doesn't, why, as Fra Elbertus says, "it really doesn't matter." I then recounted various instances of neighborhood feuds and told her that it was lots of fun later to look back and laugh about it all. "And I certainly wouldn't worry about it," I concluded, "for a woman who will cast aside a good friend and stir up the neighborhood for such a trifling thing isn't worth a single tear or the loss of a wink of sleep, and you can tell Mrs. Dill I said so, too, if you want to."

She went home actually smiling but after she had gone I held a little indignation meeting with myself. O, these interfering busybodies with nothing to do but stir up strife! Deliver me from the man or woman who, from a mistaken sense of duty, goes to a person and recounts something that he or she ought to know "for your own good, my dear." I firmly believe that more tragedies are caused by these self-same meddlers than the world will ever know of. There ought to be a special hell reserved for these tattlers where they might burn in torment for countless ages, "for their own good, my dear." Of course, this little affair is nothing of any importance but, verily, "Life and death are in the power of the tongue."

The woods are calling so I must go—do you ever hear those voices whispering among the snow-laden trees as the winter afternoons grow twilighty?" It's wonderful, Virginia, and I can hear them faintly now so I must get on my toboggan cap and sweater and hit the trail. Rachel and Anne often hear them, too, so I will probably encounter one of them in the "forest."

February 2.

"Cheer up, they ain't no hell," reminds Anne, when anyone is the least bit downcast, but her encouraging words fail



## A BIT O' SILENCE

to console me today for I'm too tired to cheer up and so cold (it's only ten above) that I'd much prefer a warmer climate for a space, for though the house party was a great success, I'm exhausted physically and mentally. Everything panned out beautifully; Anne and Dick were in town for the week-end and placed their house at our disposal so we decided to put all the girls there, including myself as chaperone, and the nine lads at our house, with Garry to see that the roof didn't come off. I left the babies here for they had their cribs and Norah slept at Esther Lane's with their latest acquisition, Samtina Spratt by name. Everybody came on the five train Friday and Ward Burlington was immediately escorted to the piano and made to stay there until he played everything he ever knew. How that boy can play! I love a man's playing anyway and Ward can give them all cards and spades when it comes to 'hitting the ivories,' as he says: I want Nancy to play, of course, and she is so full of music that she won't have any trouble but Phil simply *must* learn if I have to stand over him with a club. When Ward plays the Arab Love Song you simply have to close your eyes to see an Egyptian caravan wending it's way slowly along the desert with the Nile shimmering softly in the distance. Nancy simply can't keep still when she hears dance music but cavorts around like a little sprite from one end of the house to the other. Dad always says she's going to be a wild thing like her mother.

"This is too much—I expected more," said Ward, as he seated himself at the dinner table, and from that minute kept us in roars of laughter.

"Did you hear the story of the two cats?" he asked, as the desert was being brought in.

"No, do tell us," we chimed in unison, for we dote on Ward's silly stories.

"Well," he said, "these two felines had just consumed a hearty meal and, leaning lazily back, against the celler door, one turned to the other with the query—'Does my rat show?' "

Gretchen Holland and Eleanor Belden were just steeped in news of all the doings in town, engagements, weddings, births, divorces, deaths, and so forth, but Eleanor says that Lois keeps you pretty well posted on current events so I won't feel obliged to enumerate them. We had Stormfield's one glass hack for the evening and had to go to the dance



## A BIT O' SILENCE

"on the installment plan. My blue dress was a great success and all the girls looked sweet enough to eat. Chester sang for us after dinner and when we returned from the dance, for we girls didn't go over to Patty's until time to greet the milk-man and then we told ghost stories until daylight and were too frightened to sleep anyway. Saturday we looked about two hundred and seventy-five years old—perfect Methusalehs, every one of us.

The dance was wonderful; fine music and a perfect floor, for the committee had worked like Trojans to make it smooth and glassy. Of course, the dance wasn't exactly exclusive, being free to all who could command the price (One dollar) and felt inclined to go, and some rather weird specimens of humanity mingled with the stranded aristocracy and the first families. Garry's attention was particularly drawn to a perfectly killing youth in a gray plaid suit, scarlet tie, lavender shirt and strawberry socks. His massive head was Byronic in it's wealth of chestnut waves and he had the Bowery glide to perfection, but never seemed at a loss for fair partners.

"Do you know," thoughtfully remarked Garry, his incredulous gaze fixed on the popular one, "if I were that fellow, I wouldn't dance with a girl who'd dance with me."

Reddie Georger and I danced a little Dutch roll that he taught me—it's delightful! I'm right in my element in a ball-room always. Do you suppose in Heaven we'll be allowed to dance, once in a while? I certainly hope so, and if not, why I'll buy a ticket the other way. Some people's idea of perfect enjoyment is going to the theatre while others prefer yachting, a good ball game, the opera or traveling far and wide, but give me a ball-room, good music in perfect time, a shiny floor and a partner who knows *how* to waltz and I'll ask for nothing more.

Loring left last night and I miss him awfully. He's positively the handsomest creature I ever saw and his eyelashes make me sick with envy—that blasé, indifferent manner of his is so alluring and all the girls emit long drawn sighs of rapture if he deigns to notice them. And withal, he is so courteous and unassuming, really it isn't fair for one person to possess so many virtues. A whole tribe of us escorted him to his train and stopped at Elizabeth Watson's on the way home. After a prolonged seige of the blues, Rachel was in one of her bouyant moods last evening and



made one clever remark after another and, pitted against Elizabeth, with her deadly gift of sarcasm and wit, and Anne, with her versatile tongue, it was nip and tuck, I can tell you.

"This coffee fills a long-felt want," said Anne, as she finished her third cup, (you know, it's second nature to put the coffee pot on when anyone sees Anne coming) "it's against my principles to drink more than ten cups a day and as I carelessly consumed four for breakfast and three for lunch, I had to pass it up for dinner as I felt a party in the air and knew I wouldn't have the strength of mind to refuse the amber nectar if one did materialize."

"Yes, and parent will now sit up all night writing her article for the Record—that's a little way she has," said Patty, disgustedly. "She simply lives on coffee and will power."

"Well, the coffee won't keep her awake, you know, unless she holds the thought that it will do so," stated Madame Watson, "it's all in the mind, remember."

"I thoroughly agree with you," said Rachel, heartily, "our physical state of being is precisely what we make it by bringing things upon ourselves by our wrong thoughts. That sounds brave, doesn't it?" she said, turning to me and lowering her voice in which a husky note had appeared, "but, O, if you only knew how hard I have to work sometimes to keep from thinking."

We all immediately entered into a heated discussion concerning the present day problems on the subject of New Thought.

"What's your opinion, Mac," asked Dick, finally, turning to Bruce, who had vouchsafed none whatsoever.

"Liver" responded Bruce, shortly, "That one word answers the whole catalogue of questions."

"You're absolutely impossible, Bruce," I told him, "I move that we either get out the card tables or else go home—I'll be asleep at the switch in another minute."

"Do you mean to say that you ever fall asleep at parties, Nancy?" asked Elizabeth in feigned surprise, and I was actually too tired to pick up a book to throw at her.

This morning Philip was enumerating the thousands whom he loves madly and kept dividing them into groups, as it were.



## A BIT O' SILENCE

"But whom do you love the very best of all?" I asked him.

"You," he answered, promptly, and then, thinking better of it, amended, "Well, I guess I really love God *best* and then you, but you're in the same class with God."

February 4.

Have just returned from the post office where I was handed your welcome letter. Think of our Betsy Jane standing up alone—time certainly moves along in rapid strides, though if it were strictly in the height of fashion, it would take shorter steps this year. But really you'll soon have to be planning your daughter's coming out gowns—have you decided on a ball or an afternoon reception? I'm for the ball and desire that my niece be attired in sea-foam green and silver—I'll present her with the frock.

Melia was at the post office devouring her weekly epistle; Rachel never seems to get any mail save a regular monthly check from some western bank but Melia gets a letter every Saturday from a sister-in-law in Texas and she always reads it at the Post Office and answers it there.

I discovered when I reached my hut that a large and copious hole ornamented the heel of my left silk (note the adjective) stocking but a breath of solace was wafted over my discomfiture when I remembreed the words of one of our foremost actors—"A hole in one's stocking *may* be an accident but a darn is premeditated poverty." Nevertheless, I shall darn it with neatness and dispatch for if I didn't do a large business in the lines of premeditated poverty, we would have been settled in the old people's home long since.

On the way home, I met the dignified Roberta, soaked to the skin, having tripped and fallen headlong into one of the enormous puddles that fill the roads and crossings, an aftermath of the late January thaw. I'd be sure that I'd have double pneumonia tomorrow if I got even my foot wet, but the Mistress of Fenway ambled slowly along in no whit ruffled or concerned as to the consequences of her impromptu bath.

The little Lanes are following in mother's footsteps and have a pretty fair knowledge of her ideas concerning the evil results of "bad thinks." I refer to Marjorie and Kenton, for the tiny Gwendolyn is not yet old enough to have any ideas whatever.



## A BIT O' SILENCE

We stopped at Fenway on Sunday, after a tramp through the snow to Rushton Pond, and found poor Ed, swathed in bandages suffering the tortures of the damned, with an ulcerated tooth. "Whatever is the matter with your poor father?" I asked Kenton, who was standing guard over Ed's couch of pain. He looked at me, as though in wonder at my apparent lack of perception. "Why, Daddy's got a 'hink' " he answered, and his tone implied implicit belief that the appellation covered the whole gamut of earthly ills.

Garry was quoting Kenton's logic at Anne's last evening, where an impromptu party was in progress, whereupon Martin announced that he was likewise suffering from a certain maddening species of toothache. "I seem to have a claim, Auntie Kate," he said, seating himself beside the 'Colony Widow' as he calls her, and whose beliefs are as firmly rooted as Roberta's.

"O, no you haven't," contradicted Kate, promptly, "there's no sensation in matter, you know, and you must not hold such thoughts" and she launched forth into a brief dissertation on the joys and consistencies of her belief, while we all broke in with the most ridiculous arguments against it. You mustn't think for a moment, Virginia, that we don't respect Kate's beautiful religion, for indeed we do, but it is such fun once in a while to try to tease her about it, but we never can though, for she meets all of our attacks with calm, unruffled mien—that's part of her religion.

"Well, the fact remains, that the cussed ivory is almost killing me" remarked Martin, finally, but Kate silenced him with a few soothing remarks.

The Lady Letty lifted her lovely Irish eyes from the absorbing game of Patience poker that she was playing with Anne. "Religions may come and religions may go, but Kate goes on forever" she said, with a forced and long-drawn sigh.

"Well, she has the only consistent, hard and fast, dyed in the wool, time resisting, germ-proof religion among us," declared Anne, firmly. "O—Where can I put this three of clubs?"

Our Gilbert dancing lessons are an inspiration and a joy—fascinating is the word! Miss Knowles, our teacher, is the embodiment of grace and suppleness and has the gift of imparting her knowledge of the various steps down to a fine point. We can hardly wait to get up to Fenway Farm each



## A BIT O' SILENCE

Friday where we have the lessons, Roberta having most graciously put her huge living room at Miss Knowles' disposal. We do the Espanita, the Spanish lonesome, the darky Schottische and a host of other delightful dances. The Spanish lonesome is the most bewitching of all and I think the name is so alluring, don't you? Bill Shakespeare and I don't agree at all about the extent of meaning in a name. There's *everything* in a name, I think, and plays and books of undoubted merit have oftentimes failed utterly because of an unsuitable or uninteresting name, while as for children, their lives have been more or less marred many a time by the meaningless appellations fastened upon them; and usually in the hope that said cognomen will be the means of obtaining large amounts of filthy lucre from distant relatives or friends when the Good Lord shall have seen fit to call them. It is a great injustice and anyone with a fine or sensitive nature cannot help being more or less affected by the name which he is obliged to respond to fifty times a day. Don't you remember how poor Lava Miller had to go through life with that hideous title simply because her great aunt Lava gave her parents every assurance that her fortune would be left to her god-child. And then what did the old dame do but marry a callow youth when she was well past sixty, leaving nothing but a pair of very homely earrings and an ancient and moth-eaten sampler to the poor child. You know great Aunt Lava's name was derived from the fact that her parents spent their honeymoon in the shadow of Vesuvius. Would that it had emitted fire and brimstone from its snout in large quantities and buried them under it!

Sylvia Eastman is spending a week with me, Buttercup being filled to overflowing, and I do so enjoy having her. She is not only a continual feast to the eye but is such an adaptable and comprehensive sort of guest. Languishing swains go past the house in droves, trying to appear unconcerned and as though they hadn't the faintest idea that she was here. Well, they can do the Gay Lothario act as much as they please as long as they don't follow young Lochinvar's example and take her away from me.

Phil didn't want to get up this morning stating that he preferred to stay in bed longer as he didn't want to leave God, who was teaching him to "work the raser fing." It developed that he had been dreaming of a sojourn in heaven with God who showed him how He brought the night to us.



## A BIT O' SILENCE

"You know," said Philip, his eyes like blue saucers, "every night God slides a 'raser fing just like a blackboard 'raser, right across the sun till it's all gone and that makes the dark be here."

According to Phil, his Instructor was attired in white bloomers and a blue blouse and had gold sparks in His hair.

"And He was so kind and nice and pretty," concluded Philip, "and He patted my head and said He loved little boys and girls more den anyfing in the whole world." Precious baby; maybe it will be given unto him at some future time to throw a little light into the dark abyss of our groping doubt and misunderstanding and help solve the great enigma of life.

Betty and Jerry and Mother Van and Mr. Horton were out here Sunday and Betty told us that their lion of the office force had gone where the good lions go. They bore it until everyone had called and until they were on the verge of nervous prostration and then in a fit of desperation, sicked Timmie, their Boston terrier, at it, and he did his duty well. The children were delighted to have their "more-mama" for a whole day and climbed all over her, serenely indifferent to her suit from the Rue de Blanc. I have always thought that Nancy's name for mother Van was the cunningest thing I ever heard a grandmother called and there being such a superfluity of grandmothers (she had *two* great-grandmothers then, you know) I presume it seemed the most natural name in the world. Really mother Van had more of the care of my baby than I did for the first two years and was certainly all that a grandmother ought to be, and more. Mothers-in-law may be undesirable possessions in some cases but I wouldn't take a King's domain for mine.

I heard Nancy inquiring of Jessamine Jones yesterday if the Leeks were really going to move away and in a haughty tone Miss Jessamine replied, "I've heard so but I won't speak of it as Mama doesn't allow me to discuss the neighbors—things get around so in Stormfield." She must be some relation to the little girl who, when her mother asked her if she had told God how naughty she had been and asked Him to forgive her, retorted, "No, for it would be all over Heaven if I did."

February 18.

Rachel and her faithful Melia and Copper are here for a while and Copper has thrown Ethel Barrymore, our cat,



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into a succession of interesting fits. We simply made Rachel come for they were so snowed in at Lotus Cottage that it was positively unsafe; a lot of the lads dug them out and we persuaded them to pack up a few clothes and make us an indefinite visit. Rachel is restless, however, and wants to get back to her isolation, I know, though of course she doesn't say so. She simply permeates every room she enters with her wonderful personality; I never knew what magnetism meant before, though I thought I did. She has a quick temper, however, and flares up easily but it is really her only bad fault and she has it under perfect control. Her sense of justice is paramount and so often noticeable. It's always "but would that be perfectly fair, do you think?" or "it doesn't seem to me that that's a square deal, exactly." She reminds me so much of mother in that respect and in many other ways. You know it has so often been said of mother that she never was known to say an unkind word of anyone. I asked her once how she kept from doing so, impulsively or unthinkingly, sometimes, and she answered, "Nancy, dear, when I was a tiny girl, your grandfather gave me a beautiful rule to follow and I have never forgotten it. He told me to keep clear of personalities as much as possible and never to say anything about anyone without first asking myself these questions; Is it kind? Is it true? Is it necessary?"

Of course, that's all very well for dear, quiet, beautiful mother but, Heavens above, my jaws would ossify from lack of exercise if I followed that advice literally.

Now I planned to give up talking about people for Lent, but I seem to have forgotten my resolution, for I find myself criticizing Mrs. Larrabee's hat and Mrs. Dill's nursery curriculum when I might better be otherwise employed. Really, Virginia, we are all too hasty and ready to judge others, not stopping to realize that we ourselves are far from perfect. What food for thought is expressed in those beautiful lines—(I've forgotten who wrote them):

'In men whom men condemn as ill,  
I find so much of goodness still;  
In men, whom men pronounce divine  
I find so much of sin and blot  
I hesitate to draw the line  
Between the two, where God has not.'



The Vale baby is a darling and the perfect image of Ned, who idolizes her. She has his same wonderful curling eyelashes, too.

Natalie Barton spent yesterday here and entertained us with tales of her father's Aunt Vite who is visiting them; she comes about once in five years and looks precisely as if she had stepped out of one of Dicken's novels. She arrived Sunday night and rode every bit of the way from the station to Lenhurst Park *sitting on her trunk* in the express wagon for fear it would go astray; she arrived about midnight after they had given up all hopes of her coming at all. Natalie and Ethel visited her last year and had the funniest sort of experiences. She made them use brown sugar for everything as it was cheaper (and she has all kinds of money, the girls say) and one night when some guests were there for tea she filled up the half empty bowl with white sugar and the bowl being glass it didn't take a Sherlock Holmes to discover at least one of Auntie's economies. Aunt Vite's twin was Aunt Dite—Lovisa and Lodisa being the unabreviated forms, I believe. Dite passed on many years ago and no wonder; it is remarkable that even one survived the shock.

Anne and Lennie dropped in last night bent upon devoting the evening to auction bridge and, as usual, toward the dusky hour of midnight they demanded food—and food, last night, meant pie.

"But there is no pie in the house, Lennie," I protested, "do eat up these hard fried cakes, they will be divine with coffee."

"Obviously then, if there is no pie in the finished state, it remains for us to make some," said Anne, loftily ignoring my remark. "*Pie* we want and *pie* we're going to have—come on Lennie, get the board and rolling pin and I will go on a still hunt for lard—Nancy is looking peevish so probably won't tell us where it is, and you know she changes the location of the staple articles of food in this house as often as she changes her mind."

"Well, I have to, in order to forestall foraging neighbors," I explained, "for they get so worn out looking for what they want that they give it up and go elsewhere and then we have food for our own dinner."

They decided on apple pie so Len recklessly pared and sliced many of my cherished Northern Spies while Anne



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made the crust. Pie was browning prettily when Anne, who was looking through cup-boards gave a prolonged shriek of joy—"Len, darling!" she exclaimed, "here's a perfectly good can of cherries—quick, take the pie out of the oven, scoup out the apples and we'll place the cherries upon it's baby brow. I like cherry pie so much better."

"Are you quite crazy or merely maudlin?" I inquired, but Len, no whit taken aback, obediently rescued the pie, lifted the top crust daintily and removing the apple filling, poured in the cherries and, would you believe it? the pie we sat down to at 1.30 A. M. was a veritable triumph of culinary art. I have always thought that Isabel Langdon and her frying pan performances in the line of ham—eggs—pop-overs or any other suggested article of food at 2.30 A. M. took the palm—but it's every day routine compared to Anne.

Early in the evening the Larrabees had called but we made quick work of them and I was on pins and needles for fear the boys would openly insult them and disgrace themselves for life. Mrs. L. was in one of her lofty moods and made futile efforts to impress us with her superior knowledge of all things ancient and modern and intermediary, but it didn't work.

"The brain of the average youth of the present day is so saturated with various little smatterings of all the branches of learning that it is positively unable to concentrate upon any one thing and the result is mental chaos and inefficiency," remarked our guest, apropos of nothing, after a prolonged silence broken only by twitterings from Garry and Anne. "I really believe," she continued, "that the old fashioned gray matter is changing color also."

"O, why, of course it is," said Len, "it probably has a perfectly natural desire to keep up with the times and after running the whole gamut of old-time dove-gray, later pearl, then elephant's breath, London smoke and taupe, it has worked around gradually into lavender and royal purple and is now endeavoring to get the latest shade of blue. I've heard sis talking of Copenhagen and Cobalt blue, so I suppose it's one of those.

"O, don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt?" sang Garry rudely and Len announced that he was sure that Alice was the shade of his thinking material.

"If you were a younger man, Mr. Watson," said the unruffled Mrs. L., "I should advise you to take up the potential



influences of antediluvian research as the concentrated study of it requires close application and good sequential memory Brother Del was remarkably well informed along those lines; Del was so fond of antedatal scrutiny, you know."

"What is that? Something to eat?" asked the incorrigible Lennie, affecting a most interested attitude.

"Where do you buy those?" asked wicked Anne, "I'd like to get some with my Fair money."

They were all most disrespectful but it is safe to say that the dear dull Larrabees never tumbled.

I wonder how much longer we are all going to be kept in the dark as regards Rachel. Sometimes I am sure she is on the point of confiding in me but just as I think that she's going to give me the privilege of sharing her trouble, whatever it may be, she makes some commonplace remark about the weather or suggests a smart idea for a dinner gown and I'm exactly where I was before. Garry says he doesn't see what earthly difference it makes whether any of us ever know or not but thinks we ought to thank our lucky stars that things continue as they are so long as we can keep Rachel in our midst. Selfish creature! he doesn't seem to realize that it's all one-sided and that Rachel is getting nothing out of it whatsoever. Still she thanks me times without number for having been the means of bringing so much into her empty life.

"Nancy," she said only last evening, while we were waiting for Garry to come up from the station, "I sometimes wonder if you all think me affected or silly or pig-headed in not speaking of my past life, but I simply cannot, dear, I cannot and that is all there is about it. I often try and it's no use, but when the time is ripe I will and in the meantime, I thank the Dear Lord every blessed day for giving me such wonderful friends—I had thought that I could fight my battle in solitude but I never in the world could have done it."

It is getting late; Garry has fallen asleep in his big chair, the cat is snoozing in the flickering glow of the dying fire, and the snow is falling softly on the already heaped-up drifts. Good-night.

March 2.

The most tragic thing happened last night—one of those unforeseen little things that apparently mean nothing, yet in reality tear your heart from it's moorings. Rachel was sit-



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ting in the firelight on the big mission settle, holding Phil on her lap and cuddling him close to her. Suddenly, and without a moment's warning, he looked up into her face and said, "Lady, dear, why don't you have a husband like my mother does, and a little boy like me?"

Rachel made not a sound, but putting the child down quickly, fled from the room and up the stairs. I could have cried and poor little Phil was so bewildered that he did cry. Of course it couldn't be helped but it was just too awful. Rachel didn't come down again during the evening and Gilbertine, Patty, Garry and I played a few rubbers of frightful bridge. This morning however Rachel, dear thing that she is, acted as though nothing whatever had occurred and was especially tender to Philip.

Of course you've heard the heart-rending news about Janet Brighton. It's unspeakably sad and a crushing blow to them all. Don is inconsolable but very full of courage through it all. I never knew of such devotion between a brother and sister as exemplified by those two, and to have Janet taken now when they were planning the trip abroad together seems pretty hard. Just twenty, and so fresh and bright and sparkling with life and vivacity. O, aren't automobiles deadly things? I went right in, of course, and Don just put his head on my shoulder and gave vent to the most awful dry sort of agony that I ever saw. I feel almost worse for him than for the father and mother, though they worshipped the child.

"Nancy, do you want to know how I bear it at all?" he asked, "Why I don't end my misery and go with her?"

"Yes, Don, dear," I answered, "though I know it is because you are so big and fine that you know it's all part of the Great Plan and that God needs our dear girl more than we do and has a special work for her with Him, and anyway 'To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die.'"

"I know, but that's not it, Nan. The only reason that I'm able to live through it at all is that I haven't one regret to torture myself with, not a remembrance of one unkindness, nor can I reproach myself for a single act or word in my whole life that made her unhappy. O, how thankful I am that I was never impatient with my darling or unreasonable or cross as others were, so often, for with all our love we knew she wasn't perfect and adored her all the more for it."



I have pondered long on Don's words which are so true. Surely it behooves us all to do the little act of kindness and say the tender word *now*, doesn't it? and not try to make up for it when it is too late by weeping buckets of tears and putting millions into a tombstone. After I reached home I was telling them all about it and how it seemed to soothe Mrs. Brighton when I reminded her of those comforting words; "There is no new sorrow; we shall not be called upon to bear anything that has not been borne before."

"I think that is untrue," said Rachel quietly, "I think there are individual sorrows, peculiar to people of certain temperaments, that would not be sorrows to some so could not be classed as such, and anyway, the fact that another was experiencing a similar trial wouldn't help an atom."

"O, misery always likes company," said Garry, unthinkingly, and then flushed pitifully as he noticed Rachel's pained face. But Rachel, with her fine perception, knew that he meant no unkindness and a little later, when Garry said to her "Rachel, if you ever need anyone you know you can count on me," just put her two hands on his shoulders and answered, "You didn't have to tell me so, Van dear, I knew it."

Dr. Colt dropped in for a minute today to take inventory, as it were. Garry is always giving him the tip to run in and see how we look and act without telling us. He thinks I look slightly below the mark and lectured me severely on the subject of over-doing; says I'll have an attack of Americanitis if I don't let down on the social game a bit. I insisted that I rarely went out and that I belonged to but one or two things and you should have heard him reel off the things that I do belong to—Metaphysical club, Woman's Suffrage, Episcopal Guild, Gilbert dancing, Bridge club, literary society and several more and I had to own up to every one of them. It seems his cunning wife had given him the list before he left home—wasn't that smart? Mrs. Colt is a fine girl and I like her immensely—she seems to have all the attributes necessary to be the successful wife of a physician and you know all the trials and tribulations of that position. And by the same token, I have every intention of becoming a "Xtian Scientist" as Marsh Granger says, it's much saner and easier and altogether simpler (with apologies to Bill) and lastly but not leastly so much cheaper.





FENWAY FARM







## A BIT O' SILENCE

They are going to adopt for darling Janet's headstone, the beautiful inscription that Garry and I saw in an old burying-ground in Rome when we were there on our honeymoon:

"Here lies Felicita, who, having laid up a large fortune in Paradise, has gone thither to enjoy it."

March 14.

The top of the morning, Virginia, dear! Your birthday; may it be a most happy one and may you have many more, each one happier than the last. I hope it's as pleasant there as here today, for in Stormfield it is perfect weather. A morning full of hints of hyacinths and crocuses and pregnant with possibilities of coming spring. The soft breeze seems laden with a subtle suggestion of unseen fragrance and the air is heavenly. I am sending you three of those princess work aprons that you like so much and feel sure that they will fit like the paper on the wall. Rachel said that she never knew before that kitchen aprons could be stylish but these prove that they can. She insisted upon putting in the pair of silk stockings, saying that the insane desire for them probably runs in the family and I couldn't persuade her that they would be more appreciated here.

Rachel led the Metaphysical meeting at Sally's yesterday and it was beautifully done. Her topic was "Fear"—she chose it because she considers it the most vital thing that we have to contend with and one of the most powerful enemies of the advancement of human intelligence along psychic lines. She endeavored to show that Fear is a tyrant—a deadly thing that must be conquered before any research into scientific things is begun. And before anyone can hope to overcome the enemy he must learn the first principles of faith. She believes, Virginia, that if we could but realize that we deliberately bring trouble upon ourselves by fearing it and allowing our minds to dwell upon it, a great deal would be accomplished. "Once let a dreaded idea gain supremacy in your mind and it will play the tyrant until common sense and right thinking come into their own." Do you remember where your darling Emerson says "He has not learned the lesson of life who does not every day surmount a fear?" Well, there's the whole thing in a nut-shell, Rachel says; simply to take things easy, as it were, and not try to comprehend the whole thing in a day, but to gradually feel our way



and by the process of elimination dispel every little lingering fear from our minds. She likes Angelo Mosso's idea and it probably appeals to you, too, being a doctor's wife, that Fear is a disease to be cured and he bids us set about it by affirming that there *is* nothing to fear and before we know it there will be nothing. She found a beautiful little thing in one of Roberta's magazines and told us that it would be a good thing to repeat every morning: "The Spirit of the Lord goes before me and makes safe and secure all the way." Just say that over a few times, Virginia, and really you will feel calm and quiet and have a singular sensation of peace.

I do wish that I could believe as Rachel does and also Anne and Kate and Roberta but while I enjoy sitting on the fence and watching the game of life on either side, I guess when the betting begins I'll have to put all mine on Father William for I agree with him thoroughly as regards the disposition of things: "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will." I believe you, Bill, there is.

Several of us called on Mrs. Larrabee (after eating all of Sally's fruit cake and making the third filling of her huge tea-pot necessary), and to our mingled sensations of relief and disappointment, she was not at home, because we'd all planned to supplement Sally's feast with some of Mrs. Larrabee's delicatessen effects for she *can* cook. I discovered when I reached home that she had called on me in my absence. She might have known that I'd be out except that she doesn't seem to know anything ever under any circumstances, but she's a good soul and always asks us to her parties and really gives us a jolly good time while we all consume large quantities of her wonderful nut bread and various other articles of real food. She never seems at ease with herself, though, and makes others uncomfortable on that account. I wish I could describe her to you aptly, but do you remember Mark Twain's description of a certain woman?—it ran something like this: "She isn't exactly a refined woman, neither is she unrefined; she's the kind of woman who keeps a parrot." Well, Mrs. Larrabee isn't exactly a refined woman and she isn't exactly unrefined, but she's the kind of woman who says "infant" in speaking of a baby and calls a night gown a "garment"—you know the kind, "they come from Sheffield!"

Early Monday morning the Wende's house at the corner caught fire and wild confusion reigned supreme. We were awakened by shouts and screams and looked out just as the



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volunteer fire department hove in sight. Needless to say, we grabbed some clothes and dashed to the scene of action. All of Stormfield appeared as if by magic (as people always do when there's a fire) and, in various stages of dishabille, fell to and worked like beavers. The wind was not at all like today's, but a cold, biting March northeaster and the thinly clad workers and spectators felt it to the marrow. Norah came flying up after us with Nancy and Phil in their "trailing garments of the night" and overcoats, bringing up the rear. We all tore into Anne's house and made many pots of hot coffee for the firemen and, really, I think it did more than a little good. Dear, quick-witted, thoughtful Anne; at the first shout of "fire," she ran down and put on the tea-kettle and every pan that the stove would hold, full of water to heat for coffee, while the rest of us thought first of our own property. The fire wasn't very disastrous and as everything was fully insured it might have been a lot worse. I wish you might have seen Martin Brinkerhoff dash in and come out with a huge Mercury poised in one hand and a bowl of gold fish in the other. Of course, in the excitement, many worthless pieces of modern furniture were carefully deposited in places of safety, while some perfectly good old mahogany was left to its fiery fate. I must now make tracks for the Post Office and mail this; here's hoping that I get large armfuls of mail. I don't dare put on my pet raincoat for Garry has lain down the law in regard to my wearing it in public again. He says the only thing now to be done with it is to have it rendered.

Philip said yesterday that he wishes you would ask Betsey Jane if she doesn't think that God used awfully "jelicious" skin when he made mothers' necks.

I expect to be very busy for the next couple of weeks so don't look for many manuscripts from Stormfield; I'll try to fill the gap with postal cards, though, but won't attempt to get as much on them as Aunt Molly does; you know Dad always said that she ought to be ashamed to defraud the United States Government, sending the story of her life for one cent.

Are you glad that Billy isn't going to Honolulu after all? Foolish question, No. 44,497,683.

Mar. 30.

Just to think that my precious Betsey Jane is one year old today and I've not yet seen her—but I haven't much longer to wait for that sweet privilege and can hardly control



my impatience until you get here. I've told everybody that you have at last consented to tear yourself away from Billy for a brief interval and they are all so anxious to meet you and many little affairs are actually planned already. Gilbertine is going to give a little dinner and you may consider yourself fortunate at being the guest of honor at a Buttercup dinner. Kate Watson is a wonder in the culinary line and Gilbertine a close second, and of course, a domestic science graduate. Her candy is a thing to be marvelled at—believe me—such fudge, such cocoanut creams, such caramels and such vari-flavored cream wafers you have never yet eaten, I'm sure; you may have your nectar and ambrosia but give me Gilbertine's candy every time. We are also to spend a day at Fenway Farm and Anne is planning one of her home-like teas.

Some of us, under Mrs. Albright's direction, are going to be in a play for charity at the Opera House in May —just a little one act affair that is to be a part of a vaudeville programme. Mrs. Albright asked me if I could get some friends to do some little stunt and I immediately thought of Ward and Chester and they said they would be delighted to participate. "All the world's a stage" to Ward, who is always cavorting about and doing some antic and of course you know that Chester has been on the professional stage. They are going to get up some little skit and with Ward's prowess at the piano and Chester's wonderful voice it will surely make a hit. We have begun rehearsals as we want the performance to run smoothly and we've all entered into the spirit of the thing and are having a circus. Garry is to be Patty's husband, they being a bride and groom of three months, while I am a little French maid, engaged to the English butler, who is impersonated by Cliff Albright, the heir to the Albright millions. By the way, Len Watson's son has appeared on the scene of Stormfield's activity and is making himself very much at home under the grandparental roof and they have made him very welcome. He's a queer lad and public sentiment seems to be against him. I can't make him out at all—there's a wild and uncouth streak in him and yet a strain of gentleness and refinement withal; but of course he's had a great deal to contend with in the way of a broken up home and unhappy parents and that fact is responsible for a great deal that is lacking in his make-up.

Some one said the other day that all his short-comings and wild ways were entirely the fault of his own nature for



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his mother had always lavished everything upon him. Now how inconsistent right on the face of it; if his mother had done her part, he wouldn't have turned out the disappointment that he is. She probably did all her lavishing in the line of clothes, food, travel, and tutors and fell short when it came to the question of love and comprehension. "Them's my sentiments" and when I expressed my views to Garry he said that he considered me most unreasonable and one-sided in my idea of the question.

"Why, it stands to reason, dear," he argued, "that if there was any good in the boy he would have responded to it in some measure at least."

"Not necessarily," I answered, "there's a vast difference in the various natures of human beings and the extent to which they are affected by the actions of others; and certainly if Phil turns out a hopeless failure, I shall hold myself and you also very much to blame. For we will be, don't you think?"

Garry thought—but failed to give me the benefits of the workings of his mind; however I hold to the opinion that there is some real good in every one of God's creatures and I feel sure that there is something fine and noble in that boy and I intend to discover it too.

I ran into Anne's for a moment this morning and inquired solicitously for the welfare of the zoo—as one has to do in order to keep in the lady's good graces. All of the menagerie appeared to be in the best of health and the livestock sphere most tranquil, save for a recent tragedy in the aquarium. It seems that Cain and Abel, the two gold fish, had apparently been on the best of terms, but yesterday Cain, without a moment's warning, ate up Abel, and is now swimming around in solitary glory in his bowl. But Anne says that, while she greatly deplores his fate, she is weak on the subject of artistic finishes and that was the only consistent ending to Abel's checkered career.

It is unkind to laugh at deformities, I know, but the Larrabee's latest acquisition is a Jap chef who stutters (they have talked of one ever since they were in California, last year) and the Dills' new housekeeper, while a dear old soul, is very Scotch, very ancient, and has no roof to her mouth, and the two have taken quite a fancy to each other and to hear (also see) them conversing together is too, too much. As usual, I disgraced myself yesterday when calling informally on "Mrs. Archibald." Happy Jappy had come over to



initiate the highland lassie into the secret of cooking fowl so deliciously in the flowery kingdom and of course, as you might know, I happened into the kitchen for a glass of water just in time to hear the lady repeating some directions after him. It sounded, Virginia, exactly as though a disabled automobile were being towed unwillingly to the garage and I simply couldn't contain myself—I tried to explain that I was subject to choking fits and had them several times a day, and took a hasty and undignified departure. Although they were very nice about it I am really afraid to go out of doors alone for fear the Jap will fly at me and try some Jiu Jitsu effects in a spirit of revenge.

I'll now stop this ranting and array myself suitably for the evening. I have often been severely criticised for fussing so much about my clothes but I fail to see the idea of spending hours dressing for strangers and looking any old way about one's home. I try to take just as much pains when I am to be alone with Garry and the children as when I am going out. That's one of the things I so admire in Rachel. Up there in that cottage and with no incentive to make any effort, she always looks neat and attractive and has her hair prettily arranged. This letting go so completely that so many indulge in is a sad mistake, I think and frequently indicates a laxity in one's mental caliber. Of course, I believe in reason in all things and do not advocate straining a point or making undue effort for a desired effect, but by making little things of this sort part and parcel of our daily life they soon cease to be an effort but rather a decided pleasure.

May is a delightful month always, with its budding trees and blossoms—its wealth of violets and its errant gypsy breezes but this coming May is a red-letter month in the calendar of my life for *its* coming means *your* coming and *your* coming means the coming of Betsey Jane!

April 15.

"Curses on my fatal beauty!" Yesterday afternoon I put the finishing touches to my new red gown and dashed carelessly down to dinner expecting to make an instantaneous hit but—not so. Garry's face was a queer mixture of surprise and disapproval and the children immediately piped in unison, "That red dress isn't pretty, mother, wear your blue one."

"Which blue one?" I snapped, "that's all I have—blue, blue, blue, until I'm getting blind to all other colors. I love



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blue and it's my favorite color always but why can't I ever have anything else? There's no use trying, though, for the minute I'm strong minded enough to don another shade you all fly at me with a perfect volley of uncomplimentary remarks."

"But really, Nan dear," began Garry in a most conciliatory tone, "you're a dream in blue and it just suits you, you know; red is *not* your color and I *detest* it and had I known that you were contemplating such a concoction I would have nipped it in the bud."

"Would that you had, then," I retorted, "and saved me many hours of frenzied sewing; I'm certainly not going to throw it away for its made in just my style and I love it," by this time on the verge of tears.

"I suppose you're going to make your eyes red now, to match, so you'll be a symphony in scarlet, as it were," suggested my sweet and gentle husband and I was about to give way to my pent up rage and disappointment when Patty came in with Howard Brooks.

"How darling you look, Nancy!" they both exclaimed in unison, "where did you get that adorable dress?"

I burst into a beatific smile and cast a triumphant glance at Garret Schuyler Van Clief and replied with exaggerated carelessness—"O, it's just a little thing I put together the other day. Do you really like it?"

"It's a pippin," said Howard, helping himself to a large piece of chocolate cake and demanding a cup of coffee to go with it.

"It is perfectly precious," said Patty, warmly, "but I will admit on second thought that it's not very becoming to you—there's no doubt about it, Nancy, blue's your color."

Well, he who laughs last and so forth and so on, but Garry was decent enough not to crow but entered into an animated discussion with Howard about the relative merits of the Newark and Buffalo teams for the coming baseball season. However, he won the day as usual, and just between you and me and the lamp post I believe I'll get some dye and try my luck at changing the hue of the bone of contention.

Half the colony flocked into Buttercup Cottage last evening and requested that several packs of cards be produced and that much food be forthcoming later in the evening; we told Kate how we had all met at Morton's soda foun-



tain and felt just like a party and the lot of hostess had fallen to her.

"You were unanimously chosen, dear lady," said Bruce, elegantly, bowing to the floor.

"Well, I fear you'll regret your choice when you discover the state of the refrigerator," she answered, but found plenty after all. Some of the boys had to borrow cups from Letty and a couple of card tables from Esther but borrowing on all occasions is part of the usual program out here. Nothing is exempt and it is so nice to feel that your friends think enough of you to ask for anything.

Did I tell you how I looked in vain for my little violet mull one evening lately when I had come back from town, tired and dusty, and wanted to put on something thin? Finally, Norah, hearing me going wildly through clothes presses and bureau drawers, called up—"O, I forgot to tell you, Mrs. Van Clief, that Miss Tennant was in this afternoon and took that lavender dress of yours to wear to a dance tonight."

Last evening, while we were waiting for the crab meat to bake, Anne picked up the lovely book of quotations that Aunt Judith made for me and which Gilbertine had borrowed, and read aloud the poet's query: "What is real good?" And you know the answer, "Kindness is the word."

"That's the truest sentiment ever expressed," said Anne, vehemently, "there is nothing in Heaven or Earth like pure, unadulterated kindness—the big, broad, far-reaching tenderness that accepts without parley or question and doesn't weigh the worthiness of the case."

"It's true that kindness has done much to brighten human lives," said Letty, "and has even been the means of *saving* a life or one's reason on occasion, but I echo Carlyle's sentiment in calling 'sincerity, great, grand sincerity, the greatest attribute.'"

Rosamond said that she thought love and forgiveness should have first place but Anne informed her that kindness covered both those characteristics.

"I'm with the dreamer in the poem," said Bart Marston, "and put ditto marks under his idea of 'freedom' for it includes so many things."

"The page and I go hand in hand," said Roberta, "for beauty is the realest and can do the most good in the end, and anyone of keen perception will readily see that beauty embraces the whole category."



## A BIT O' SILENCE

"It usually does," said Kate, with a twinkle, "but I'm for the law court and its 'order' for I'm minus my book of cross-stitch rules just through some one's lack of understanding of the word and am ready to annihilate the whole family, for I have all those peacock towels to do for Marion Crandall and am helpless without it."

"Garry had kept silent through the discussion but at this juncture remarked, dryly: "Those ideas are all very beautiful if you know what you're talking about but in my opinion Friend O'Reilly has omitted the most important thing of all—money; why, brothers and sisters and uncles and aunts, it's the art of amassing the spondulux, the shekels, the hard, flinty coin that counts in this world and nothing else can hold a candle to it. You poetic ones can think as you please but you know I'm telling the truth when I say that it's the 'man with the dough' who gets there every-time. The world appreciates cleverness, it bows before beauty and takes its hat off to genius and fame but it kowtows and salaams and falls on its knees before the magic word 'money' and that's as true as eternity."

Think of that from my Garry! I felt like the wife of an old pessimist but a moment later Nancy fell out of bed with a crash and Garry flew up the stairs three at a time and when I got there he was holding his daughter in his arms and kissing her bumped head and the look on his face and the tone of his voice set all my fears about Garry's cynicism at rest.

"Nobody asked my opinion and I didn't volunteer it, but I'll tell you, Virginia, what I consider life's greatest possession and that is 'youth.' All the other things have their rightful place and even Garry's sordid money means power and can buy nearly everything, happiness frequently and oftentimes health or the means to it, but 'youth' is the greatest of them all—a veritable gift of the gods, for desire and ambition and enthusiasm go hand in hand with it, dancing along life's road-way, and nothing seems hopeless, impossible, or out of reach.

"What's the matter with Kate this evening?" asked Bob Thornton, "the beautiful lady doesn't seem as sprightly as usual."

"I'll tell you what's the matter with Kate," answered our hostess, for herself, "I've spent most of this glorious day in the dentist's chair and the man nearly annihilated me—my religion notwithstanding. I dread going so and this morn-



ing I lay in my bed and prayed that I'd die and wouldn't have to go but I couldn't seem to die and so I went. He hammered and dug at live nerves and prowled around in pastures new until I could stand it no longer. 'Now look here' I said to him, 'are you going to work among the quick or the dead—I must know before another move is made.' 'The dead' he answered in a rather terrified voice, so I told him he might go on. And this poor feeble wraith that you see before you," she concluded, "is what is left of a once very beautiful woman."

Anne and Roberta were so tired last night that they both fell asleep with plates of food in their hands; they had been out all day helping a poor dying woman through her last hours and cooking for the little children and cleaning up the dirty house. It is a regular thing with them and with so many out here; really this town is full of the milk of human kindness and when anyone is in trouble, everybody joins forces and goes to the rescue. And when I think, Virginia, of how far a little bit will reach and how much a tiny bit will do—whether it be material aid or the tactful, loving deed, it makes me blush for shame that I do so little.

"And just *one word*, if said for love's sweet sake, may save a soul."

April 30.

"The die is cast"—yes, really it is; I purchased a package of black dye and Norah and I set to yesterday and the passing of the scarlet gown was accomplished with greatest success. And the black crepe de chine gown is not to be sneered at, either. I added a few touches of gold and pale blue panne velvet and it's a thing of beauty, neat, but not gaudy, as Patty says—"cum sah!" I shan't tell Garry a thing about it but will flaunt my black effect before his astonished eyes and keep him guessing as to the fate of the much-abused red. Rachel were here all day yesterday and made quick work of a two weeks' accumulation of darning for me. I appreciate it very much for she loaths sewing in every shape and form. I told her of your great antipathy to it and how you always said that a paper pattern was a perfect Chinese puzzle to you and Rachel says that you and she would be kindred souls.

Really it is marvelous the way she broadens and expands under her burden. So often sorrow simply hardens but I can see the fine grain of Rachel's nature very clearly through



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its veneer of bravado and can watch the progress of a wonderful growth. Every day she seems bigger and finer than before and while her weight of trouble is crushing her in one way, it is uplifting her in another. It is a revelation to me for it has been my experience in reading character that, as a rule, *happiness* is all-sustaining while trouble and sorrow crush and break, even though the victims learn, before they have travelled very far on the Road of Life, to bow to the inevitable.

Patty and I are planning to go down to Ithaca in May for the Cornell-Michigan game and though it is weeks off we can't talk of anything else—save your coming. Garry and Karl are to trot along with us and we are planning a most interesting day. Loring plays on the Michigan nine, of course, and our adorable Sliv Chaddock on the Cornell team. "Aye, there's the rub!" I want Loring to win, certainly, and yet Sliv is a Stormfield boy and we are to be with his father and mother at the field; well, I won't cross any bridges before I come to them, but I do wish both sides could win.

Wednesday was a busy day, indeed. Anne, Rachel, Mrs. Edwards, Mrs. Riselay and I went miles out in the country towards the lake to investigate a case that had been called to Anne's attention.

Mrs. Riselay is a charming woman, and is always ready at a moment's notice to put her big fine horses and her carriage at our disposal or to drive us herself. We found an awful case of destitution. A poor young father with three little motherless boys on his hands to wash, dress and cook for in addition to working his miserable farm. We went down with the carriage loaded with good things to eat and also clothing and bedding but we simply couldn't take the things into the house until we had spent the morning cleaning it. Words fail me, Virgie, when I attempt to describe the filth, but what could the poor man do? I really do not think there had been a woman in the house since the wife died two years ago and she must have been helpless. Why, my dear, the papers on the pantry shelves were dated nine years back.

"Well, we scrubbed and delved and washed floors and dishes and children and windows and gave the man a few lessons in practical housekeeping. Rachel bathed the littlest boy and dressed him in a suit of one of the young Kauffmanns that Dora had sent. He fell asleep in her arms as she gently crooned lullabies and sang "Bobby Shaftoe's gone to



sea" and it was with reluctance that she put him in the broken down crib when it was time for us to go. I'm wondering what will become of the little girl, aged eleven, when she gets back from the poor grandmother's this summer for there's only one miserable bed beside the crib. I shall make it my business to see that she is taken care of.

"O, the poverty and suffering in this beautiful world! To think that we complain when the weather doesn't suit us or a cake falls or a dress doesn't turn out just exactly as we had planned. I could beat my head when I think of it. And there are such dire tragedies at our very doors that we know not of—verily "we have eyes and we see not." And you'd be surprised at the diversity of opinion about this case and similar ones. One woman said that any man who couldn't keep a house clean didn't deserve help and we were fools to waste our energy on him or his brats. Of course, she knows lots about taking care of three small children, having none of her own and spending all of her time on a nasty little squinty poodle. She's the kind who makes her husband come in at the side door and who goes around after her guests if any dare go there, with a carpet sweeper. She is of the same persuasion as a woman whom Mrs. Edwards was telling about who wouldn't miss her weekly missionary (foreign, of course) meeting if the skies fell but who refused point blank to give any assistance to the poor Jennings girl for her poor fatherless baby, saying, "Well, she made her bed so let her lie on it." If they have beds in the next world, Virginia, I hope I'll have the pleasure of making up a few for some of the large army of narrow minded individuals of that stamp who clutter up the earth. I'll stick them full of pins!

I must tell you of the naughty escapade that your beautiful niece and nephew and several other infant prodigies took part in yesterday. It was a bright, windy day and towards noon Amy's maid was in the garden hanging out the clothes, serenely oblivious to the fact that many pairs of eagle eyes were upon her; and before she had been in the house a half hour, these same desperadoes marched up to the line, unpinned divers damp and moist articles of clothing and put them on and, verily, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Phil in a tan linen of Amy's, Constance Lane in a hobble effect made of one of the maid's aprons, little Bill Donnelly in a night-gown and the others in petti skirts, lingerie effects and pillow cases, marched around



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through the backyards, ending up in Kauffmann's corn field where all took part in a ghost dance—in the noon-day sunlight. How it happened that they weren't noticed before the mischief was done nobody knows but the coup was successfully carried through and most of the clothes discovered towards sunset lying in a torn and muddy heap under our garbage barrel while Amy's yellow dress was brought forth this morning from the seclusion of our box couch where it had spent the night.

This whole morning had been given up to futile attempts to appease Amy's wrath by much washing, ironing and mending of the Vale wardrobe and offers to replace the hopelessly ruined garments by the respective mothers of the little culprits. I don't blame Amy much, however, and think it was a most maddening performance and not a bit funny. This last is a large fib for I am shaking with mirth as I tell the tale. I could write on forever to you but "enough is as good as a feast," you know, and while this is not a feast, I'm sure you will agree with me that it is quite enough—for today.

May 15.

I'm cured—absolutely and irrevocably cured, Virginia, and I'll never use one word of slang again as long as I live, for I said the most awful thing last night and feel positively disgraced. It was the night of the confirmation at our church and the services were followed by a big reception at Mrs. Edwards'. Bishop Lawton kept flitting from one flower of humanity to another discoursing on every conceivable topic while all the reception committee were vainly trying to propel him to the dining room in the hope that he would take care of the inner man before leaving for his train, which was the last one back to town. I had been on my good behavior all evening and the strain of being dignified was beginning to get on my nerves. And as little bits of conversation were wafted to my ears, such as "Dear me, he must hurry and eat or he will miss his train" and "Cannot somebody make him go to the dining room," etc., I gazed after his departing figure, as I *thought*, and echoed the sentiments of the company thusly: "Yes, old boy, if you don't want to miss your train you'd better just grab a sandwich and beat it, Bish, beat it!" And, Virginia, as I live and breathe, he stood directly behind me and heard every word. I thought Bob Thornton would have hysterics and I was all colors of the rainbow. All I hope is that I never see the Bishop again



for I shall go straight through the floor if I do; but I shall take especial pains to avoid him in the future. It was Mr. Larrabee's broad back that I mistook for the ecclesiastical shoulders, Mr. L. having spent most of the evening in the vicinity of the refreshments. 'Tis said that "one thorn of experience is worth a whole wilderness of warning" and this is a large and copious cactus patch in the prime of its life.

Our little play came off last Friday night and was mighty good, if one of the performers may be allowed to pass judgment upon it. Garry was the handsomest thing I ever hope to see and Patty was entrancing in her loveliness. I wish we might always assist nature by adding a few touches of color to cheek and lip—what a difference it "do" make.

Little flakes of powder, little dabs of paint  
Make the homely female look like what she aint!

Bart Williams, who came out from town to make us up, said that my eyes didn't require any touching up but I insisted upon being decorated with the gooey black stuff simply because all the others were having it on and I was sure I'd be ravishing; but I paid for my vanity the next day when I lost seventeen perfectly good eyelashes getting the vile concoction off.

Chester and Ward brought down the house with their skit and, really, Chester's get-up defies description. He also sang some exquisite songs.

It was a beautiful silvery night and Bruce insisted upon taking Rachel home; I do hope he hasn't proposed or done anything rash—moons do so go to one's head. There was a delightful dance after the performance and I couldn't decide whether I ought to dance the first with my husband or my erstwhile butler fiance and positively they almost came to blows over it; the unwonted popularity nearly finished me, I can assure you. Garry says I make such a perfect maid that of course I'll never need one, but opinions are divided on that subject in the Van Clief family.

Norah, Mrs. Barney and I are cleaning house, wildly and frantically, brooms, mops and cleaning appliances generally being worked overtime. Anne and Kate think that I and all those of like persuasion are almost, if not quite insane, as house-cleaning in the good old-fashioned sense of the word is against their principles.

"Of course, it's all right if one wants to," says Kate, affably, when we remonstrate with her, "but we Buttercups



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confine our efforts to a weekly dusting and lapping up of floors and say 'sufficiency'"; while Anne contends that she fails to see the point in stirring up strife and *making* work for oneself.

Personally, I like the general upheaval, spring and fall, and enjoy going through attic, trunks and clothes-presses and weeding out the inevitable junk that accumulates with such incredible celerity. But Kate evades the argument by reminding us that she has no attic and no trunks and therefore no weeding to do, and when her house was papered a short time ago she established a precedent along the line of the elimination of unnecessary labor. Buttercup consists of but one big L-shaped room downstairs, which serves the purpose of living and dining-room, and a tiny kitchen. On this particular morning, Gilbertine and I had gone downtown to the postoffice for the early mail and reached the cottage a moment after the men arrived, with hand wagon and rolls of wall paper. I simply had to run in, of course, to see the "ravishing blue" that Kate had selected, and found the men gazing around at the scene of order in the room, from which nothing had been removed.

"Perhaps she wants us to begin upstairs," suggested one, and then, turning to Gilbertine, he asked if this were not the right morning.

"Why I think so," answered Gilbertine, "I'm almost sure I heard mother say something about it—mother!" she called, raising her voice, "the men are here to do the papering—you'd better come down and tell them where to start."

"All rightee," answered mother, "I'll be there in just a moment—I'm cutting out a shirtwaist and I don't seem to be fully clothed as yet, but they can begin anywhere, for that matter," she concluded.

"But, mother dear," remonstrated her tall child, "there is nothing ready, no pictures down or anything," and she gazed helplessly at the men who returned her look with no little annoyance on their countenances.

Kate, sewing in hand, came running down, very charming in a kimona of deep blue silk with an exquisitely careless design of old gold and pale blue butterflies scattered about on it.

"I'm so glad you're here," she said to the workers, "and you can start right in; just take the pictures down and move the things out of the way as you go along and then replace them immediately for I do hate that upset look and then it



will save oceans of time—O, and please be sure to dust the pictures before rehangings them. My daughter will give you a duster—thank you so much for coming today, I think you're so nice. Isn't that blue adorable, girls?" she went on, turning to us, "really, it's heavenly," and with a smile and nod she went back to her sewing.

"Well, of all the 'noive'!" said one man, sotto voice, to the other, "But ain't she the nifty one, though?"

"Nifty, and then some," laconically answered man number two, "but Bill Parks told me this place was a regular three-ring circus—said Dieffenbach never had no trouble getting fellows to work here a second time, and I guess we can swing it."

"I guess they'll have to," whispered the nifty one's daughter in my ear, "I might have known mother wouldn't move anything, it would savor too strongly of cleaning house in the true sense."

"And I had been thinking that she'd be forced into doing so," I said, "when I heard rumors of a change of wall covering, but 'not so' it seems."

"You'd have to get up pretty early in the morning to get ahead of mother," Gilbertine said, with an unconscious note of pride in her tone.

"Only to discover probably that she had not gone to bed at all," I finished. "I acknowledge myself ignominiously defeated in the battle of wits before I even enter the arena."

The man whom Garry engaged to plow our lot and plant the garden strolled in Sunday morning to make final arrangements and as Garry had simply asked Dick Tennant to send a good man here, he thought it might be well to preface his remarks by asking the man's name. Man was positively the largest human creature I ever saw—about six feet six and weighing about three hundred pounds, but he answered to the query as to what title he bore by saying in the weakest, thinnest voice imaginable—"Pearl Rose, Sir." I made a bee line for the cellar and laughed until I ached. He said that he didn't live right in the town but had a little place in the "skirts outside the city." He looks quite capable of drawing the plough himself so I won't have to worry about whether or not he's overdoing.

Kate says she knows she has some blushing maiden to thank for the remarkable change in Nelson's deportment (he is just 15) as regards ablutions and washing of hair and face.



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"Up to the present time," she said at the club yesterday, "my son and heir has been inveigled into washing his neck only by frequent offers of large bribes or forced to do so at the point of the bayonet but now he uses up large quantities of soap daily and spends much valuable time scrutinizing himself in the mirror; the only solution, of course, is a youthful affinity, and while I hate to have him begin so early to take an interest in girls, I am grateful for anything that will relieve me of that continual nagging."

"Yes, 'any port in a storm,' " said Anne, "but don't pat yourself on the back yet, Katydid, just wait until the football season begins."

Stormfield is gas mad just now—everybody drilling wells in their backyards and many making lucky strikes. Instead of "How do you do?" or "Good morning" the invariable Stormfield greeting of the moment is "Have you struck yet?" or "How many feet down are you?" and the like. Tony Tennant and his followers (he is always the ringleader) have erected a very imposing looking structure in the field at the rear of our house and are "drilling" from dawn till dusk. Philip is Remington's faithful shadow and, attired in overalls, stands at his post and does Tony's bidding, happy in being near his idol.

Gilbertine ran in yesterday and dragged me from my sewing to see the sight. "Nancy," she said, "do come out in the daisy meadow for a little minute and gaze upon your angel child—he certainly leads a charmed life or he would have passed on long since."

At the topmost pinnacle of the shaft, Virginia, was stationed Philip, my king, and my remonstrances were in vain.

"I've got to be here, Mother," he said, "for I'm first head driller and I have to tell the other fellows what to do."

"First head driller," Virginia, do you realize the importance of even my station in life?—think of being the parent of such an one.

"We've struck it this time, I guess," said Remington, mopping his brow, "you can smell the fumes or something."

"Well, they must be almost to China by now, so maybe it's something cooking down there," suggested Nancy, who was looking on in rapt amazement.

"Maybe so," acquiesced Gilbertine, "but come, Nan—this sun is unbearable—let's get under cover and pray that they will live through it all."



## A BIT O' SILENCE

Anne and Kate felt weird and romantic the other night and decided that they were very tired of their homes and families and would greatly enjoy sleeping on the banks of Rushton Pond. So they set forth with hair flying and blankets over arms but after vainly trying to coax sleep in their direction for some hours they gave it up as a bad job and deserted the alluring moonlit spot, with its millions of huge mosquitos, for the more prosaic but comfortable inducements of their own beds. The Tennant and Watson children are quite prepared for anything that their respective mothers may elect to do, and never turn a hair no matter what these same parents may decide might be interesting or instructive.

This will possibly be the last letter before you come; I can hardly wait to see you and to hug the baby lamb. Rachel has planned to go to New York for a week just before you arrive but, of course, will be back again before you've been here more than a few days. She's going down to consult a specialist about a most annoying pain in her head and a queer feeling in her heart that is most distressing. I could tell her that the whole trouble is that her heart isn't within a thousand miles of where it ought to be, but I don't dare. Garry will go in to town early to meet you and I will be at our grand reunion station when the train pulls in. Until then and always, God be with yon.

May 25.

I can scarcely realize that you have been here and gone again; it seems like a dream and *such* a disappointing dream but, of course, there was no question about it; if Billy is ill, your place is with him and your visit with us is of no consequence in comparison. But only four little days here and all the lovely things that had been planned for you gone up in smoke! Well, it will all be the same in a hundred years, as Loring always says and we will have to grin and bear it; and anyway I have had my adorable Betsey Jane in my arms and have kissed her beautiful rosebud mouth and feasted my eyes on that glorious burnished copper head. I wonder if you realize what an unusually beautiful child you have—the marvelous coloring and perfectly moulded features—why, even her fingers are little tapering models of perfection.

Then, too, you've seen my darling kiddies again, had a peep at my little nest, and met Anne and a few of the others and had a look about the village, so my letters will mean a



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little more to you than they did before your flying visit. Didn't you love the town with its big shady avenues and pretty houses? I knew you'd feel the spell of the place before you had been here a day. Of course, my disappointment at your not meeting Rachel cannot be estimated but why cry over spilt milk? I am particularly glad that you had the day at Fenway Farm with Roberta and her dear children— isn't Gwendolyn a love? And did you ever imagine anything half so exquisite as that view from the breakfast room windows? That big apple orchard sloping down to the bank of the little creek, the trees heavy with fragrant blossoms in those indescribable shades of pink.

We are to dine with the Louis Dickinsons tonight and are overjoyed at the prospect for they are both delightful. Mrs. D. was one of the girls to whom Uncle Jim paid court in his salad days and is a large stunning blonde while the honorable Louis is the kind of man who ought to be president of the United States to be in his proper sphere. Dear me, what are we going to do with Uncle Jim—do you suppose that he will *ever* marry? I'm afraid he's hopeless, though I hear interesting rumors once in a while when I dash to town, concerning a fascinating widow and I'm clinging to the tiniest spar before quite giving up.

"Don't anybody justurb me, please," Nancy just called from the nursery, "I'm writing a pome."

"What is a poem?" I asked, wondering what my bright child would do next.

"Why, a pome," she answered, gravely, "is something you write when you feel happy inside because the flowers are so pretty—sometimes you write it and sometimes you play it on the piano."

Do you know I get panicky when I think about the future and wonder what it holds for that child. I pray every day of my life that I may live until she is grown up, at least, for I want to shield her from everything that is hard or bitter in this unfathomable existence of ours—and she takes life so very solemnly and things are always going to mean everything to her—or nothing. I can see that plainly now. I never give an anxious thought to my big, beautiful boy, with his calm, phlegmatic disposition—troubles will roll off him like drops of water off a nasturtium leaf and he won't recognize worries if he meets them on the street (a la Garry) but Nancy is so different.



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O, what a tender feeling a mother has for a daughter! Our sons fill us with pride and we love them every bit as much but there's a little unseen bond of sympathy between a mother and her girl child that means indescribable things. Whatever will I do, when she is grown up, if any man dares to want to marry her, I wonder? I shall probably say "Bless you, my children" and sew madly on her trousseau, for that is the way of the world. And really, I hope that both our children will marry early—I thoroughly approve of it and certainly I speak from experience for I was just out of kindergarten when I put Garry out of his misery by marrying him, and he wasn't exactly ancient, either.

I am due at Mrs. Edwards' for luncheon in an hour and I don't seem to be making any undue effort to get ready but I always hate to stop when I am writing to you for I can reel off anything and you seem to enjoy it. Mrs. Edwards is one of the cleverest women in Stormfield and it's a treat to be in her company for an hour or two. Her husband is a school principal and without a doubt the *handsomest* school principle in the state.

Nancy and Phil just came in with armfuls of violets and the room is filled with their fragrance. But this is May and May and violets are one.

June 8.

Rachel returned last night and came hurrying up here this morning perfectly wild to see you and is actually sick with disappointment at the pranks Fate has played with our plans and is calling down large volumes of wrath on the fickle dame's head. She says you will simply have to come right back as soon as Bill is well enough and I vehemently echo her sentiments.

Mrs. Larrabee and her patient spouse called last evening and Garry and I put in a most wretched hour for Mrs. L. was unusually talkative and yet said not one word worth repeating, as usual. Poor soul—how awful it must be to lack every human and interesting trait. I wish you might have gone in her house—it has that queer funeral odor and atmosphere of suppression that always makes one want to ask "Does she look natural?" Bruce says Mrs. Larrabee looks for all the world as if she came out of the ark while Garry says she's the missing link, without a doubt.

Our day at Ithaca was delightful—the only drawback being that Cornell won, for of course the minute I got there



## A BIT O' SILENCE

and set eyes on Loring I prayed that Michigan might win. Sliv and his nice brother Terry met us at the train and took us to the Dutch Kitchen for lunch and then we were whirled to the game in the Chaddock 40 H. P. machine. Patty and I shrieked ourselves hoarse and could scarcely speak at all on the return trip, another good use for a ball game agreed the boys, as we stared at them silently (did you get that?) all the way home. Going down, an old man, about eighty, but quite springlike and jaunty, who sat across the aisle from us, insisted upon telling the story of his life to slow music, the accompaniment supplied by the rumbling of the train. Patty and I became hysterical and the boys were most embarrassed, while old baldtop ranted on, supremely indifferent to our mirth and lack of attention. He was crazy about Patty's blonde hair and asked me in a stage whisper if it was all hers. I told him that I wasn't sure but that her grandmother was one of the seven Sutherland sisters and that she probably inherited it. Suppressed mirth from escorts. When we were in the dining car coming home and had just settled down to a delicious meal—who should totter in but Mr. Methuselah. He came right up to our table and conversed affably all the way back to Buffalo. Miss Tennant has certainly made a hit.

We have decided to go north to visit Dad and Mother about the twentieth and expect to have the time of our lives. Loring is there for the summer, of course, and Uncle Jim will be there also while we are and Karl is going up too, in fact, is going to try to leave Toronto the same night we do. Karl has always been my favorite cousin, you know, and I'm so glad we are to be there together. I hate to leave Rachel but can hardly wait to see Dad and Mother and Cobalt and Haileybury and the mines and all the interesting things they've been writing about—not to mention the new house. I have never seen a mining town but from Dad's description of Cobalt I haven't missed much as far as architectural and civic beauty is concerned. The babies are wild with excitement as might be expected and can hardly sleep nights—I haven't noticed any particular falling off in appetites, however.

Rachel has promised to write often and Anne and all the others are going to plan to be with her most of the time. How that woman has endeared herself to us all! Bruce will be away on his vacation while we are gone and I am so relieved—I was so afraid he would make a botch of things



in my absence. I am more than glad that brother Bill has completely recovered his equilibrium and is in his usual good spirits. Karl thinks somewhat of taking Charley Geers up with him and I shall certainly pass away if he does. Charley gets on my nerves most awfully for he's a perfect old maid and too fussy for words. He makes me think of old Aunt Molly Martin—you know she walked in the straight and narrow path of systematized routine and had it down fine. I'll never forget Uncle Jim saying one night, when we were discussing her—"I honestly think that Aunt Molly would wash on Monday if it came on Sunday"—and she would, too. Charley is a strict vegetarian, too, you know, and never touches meat under any circumstances, but it's my private opinion that getting on the outside of a large porterhouse steak would do Charles Augustus a great deal of good.

I wish you could see Anne's garden—a riotous growth of fragrant pinks and glowing poppies, stately hollyhocks and dainty sweet peas—and the bluest of blue cornflowers—all nodding and smiling in the sun.

I am working the sewing machine overtime but we must have clothes, even if we *are* going to the end of the earth. Nancy disapproves most heartily of the two little dresses that I've made her and say she won't wear them as they won't look pretty on her—she certainly will wear them, however, and was promptly sent to her room for laying down the law to her elders. She must overcome the self-consciousness that is growing upon her and Phil is imbibing some of it too. She thinks altogether too much about how she looks on certain occasions and the tendency must be nipped in the bud. I certainly do not want them to be forward children and at the same time I'd hate to have them bashful—we must strike the happy medium, somehow. Of all things, deliver me from the bashful child that clings to its mother and hides its head whenever a stranger appears. Mother Van is always telling me how extremely bashful Garry was as a child. Now, I adore my charming mother-in-law and I'd hate to accuse her of not always adhering to the solemn truth, but what marvelous transformations time, in its flight, can bring about.

The thirtieth, being a holiday, Bruce spent the day here and we all wisely decided to take it easy by lazily remaining at home on our spacious veranda instead of going somewhere for a "good time" and having an awful one as people always do on holidays. After luncheon we were all very much occupied in doing nothing when Kate Watson hove into sight,



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very fetching in pale blue linen and nodding plumes, the one incongruous note in her otherwise harmonious appearance being a large market basket which was swinging over one arm.

"Where are you going, my pretty maid?" called Bruce, when Kate was within hailing distance.

"I'm going a-visiting, sir, she said," answered Kate, "and I'll have to hurry to make my train."

"But why for the basket, pretty maid?" persisted Bruce, hanging over the railing in his eagerness.

"In lieu of a suitcase, sir, she said," called Kate, her voice growing fainter in the distance.

I dashed down the steps and sped along with her, eagerly proffering everything in the line of suitcases, trunks and handbags that the house afforded.

"Thanks, awfully, Nan," she said, as we went along at the rate of forty miles an hour, "but I haven't time and this will do nicely as I'm only going to the Crandall's for a few days and when Marion and Fred see my traveling outfit they will undoubtedly present me with a good looking bag, but really, I was forced to resort to this," she went on, "for Gilbertine has taken the best suitcase to Rochester, Sylvia's gone to Buffalo for a couple of days with the other and Nelson has the only bag at Brighton—with his baseball togs reposing in it, so there was nothing else to do for Marion just telephoned an hour ago and I hadn't time to borrow a decent apparatus from any of my long-suffering neighbors. But this basket holds a nightie and kimono and a little evening gown and slippers nicely and more than serves the purpose."

By this time we had reached the station and the train was pulling in. Kate boarded it daintily and waved a most unconcerned goodbye, while the huge basket swayed clumsily on her arm. I've never noticed many faults in Kate though she probably has her share but it's safe to say that false pride is not one of them.

Garry told me that I looked almost human last evening (and *that*, from him, is the highest pinnacle of praise) and asked where I got the stunning black crepe de chine gown that I had on. I told him that I had ordered it from New York, "seein' as how" he didn't approve of my red one, and that the large bill for it would trot along almost any day.



## A BIT O' SILENCE

June 16.

"Will wonders never stop ceasing?" Uncle Jim is engaged! Yes, on my honor, he is—he just called up from town and broke the news gently and asked me to pass it along immediately. The lucky girl is one of his old schoolmates and is a widow of undoubted charm. I am so glad that he has at last seen the error of his ways and is going to follow the example of every sensible man in the world, for of all the uninteresting things, an old bachelor is the most uninteresting without a doubt—though I may add that I have met a few attractive exceptions that prove the universal rule.

The moon was glorious last night and by the silver light of her countenance the colony wended its way up to the 'Operry' House where a little summer-night dance was on. The music was not of the best and much as we all love dancing, we spent most of the evening on the broad upper veranda with its vine-covered pillars, which is directly outside the ballroom. Young Dick Tennant is a beautiful dancer and is certainly getting on. It's astonishing how the boys and girls seem mere children one day and young men and women the next; Dick has lovely manners, naturally, and will be a second Richard, Sr., I am sure. He joined our little corner group after a most strenuous waltz with some dowager whom he felt in duty bound to ask for a dance, she being the aunt of his lady fair, one Natalie something or other, who gives one an impresson of big eyes, large hair-bows and too short skirts.

"That was what might be called making a toil of pleasure," he remarked, mopping his brow and seating himself on the railing beside me.

"You 'done noble', Dickie boy" said Patty, "but it wasn't a circumstance to my last one—*did* you all see me cavorting with the 'Press'?"

"We did indeed," said Kate, "and I would like to state that you needn't feel that way about it at all, for I consider friend Layton of the "Stormfield Banner" just about the best dancer I ever danced with—Garry Van Clief, excepted, of course."

"O, very well, Auntie Kate," said Patty, with a futile attempt at haughtiness, "every man to his taste," and she entered into an animated conversation with Bruce on the subject of girls in general and a certain one in particular. The supper was unspeakable so Anne suggested merely toying



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daintily with it and all going back to her house for real food.

"We might break these Haviland cups, children," she suggested, "and we'd never be able to replace them if we did."

"Cups?" echoed her tall son, scornfully, "They are young cisterns and nothing less—I second mother's motion; forward march!"

When we reached the house we found Rachel lying in a hammock under the Japanese poplar, with the faithful Copper on guard.

"I feel nervous tonight, Anne," she said, in her rich, liquid voice, "and I've been walking for hours and finally turned in here—went through the house and found only Remington and Prince so decided to take a turn in the hammock and fell asleep from sheer exhaustion."

She was a picture as she lay there in the moonlight, her dusky hair all tumbled and her eyes like limpid pools.

"O, do apologize, Rachel," said Anne, ironically, "you know you must always stand on ceremony with me."

"You old tease," said Rachel, playfully, but I could see that she had been weeping and her bravado was feigned.

"Man alive—she's a queen," said Bob Thornton, staring at her, "I'm going in and put blinders on."

Patty, who is busy all day helping Anne at the thousand and one tasks that make up the day's work, was starting for the kitchen to put on the coffee pot when she was forcibly restrained and told to remain with the common herd on the lawn and veranda while a select few of the lads waited upon her.

"This is too, too much," she said, as coffee, sandwiches, crackers and cheese were handed to her in rapid succession. "I feel like the woman who said she always had a "routine" of servants.

Suddenly and without a moment's warning Rachel stood up and announced her intention of leaving.

"Thanks for the food, dear," she said to Anne, "but I *loathe* moonlight and tonight everything seems fairly steeped in it—goodnight." And before anyone could speak a word she was gone. Bruce dashed after her but some of the boys restrained him, assuring him that she evidently wished to be alone and that with Copper she was perfectly safe and anyway it was as light as day.

"Just as you say, fellows," he agreed, and then, feigning weariness, added that he was all in himself. "So I guess I'll



## A BIT O' SILENCE

beat it," he concluded "and I'd give the large sum of fifty cents if I could jump on a trolley car or into an automobile or some kind of conveyance."

"Why don't you go to the kerb and hail the traditional passing cab?" I suggested. "There's always one in stories."

"Well, there isn't any kerb, for one thing, and this isn't a story," interposed Garry.

"No, it's real life, with a vengeance," said Bruce, huskily and was soon lost to sight among the shadows.

June 17.

"Can you recount to me, Nan dear," asked Garry at dinner last evening, "some of the terrible crimes that our son and daughter have committed lately in the name of sport? I walked up with Mr. Jones tonight"—Jessamine's fond parent, you know—"and he gave me the impression, in a roundabout way, that the VanClief children were rather boisterous, to put it mildly, or in plain American, little devils."

"Do you mean to tell me," I said, almost bursting with rage, "that you are getting it too? Really, it's intolerable—there's been a perfect epidemic of tattling around here lately and it's getting on my nerves. Our children are blamed for everything and I'm supposed to give up my entire time to protecting the cherished infants in the neighborhood from the terrific onslaughts of my own vicious offspring. As far as I can see, Nancy and Phil are the only real children in the vicinity; for, according to their respective mothers, all the others are angels with sprouting wings. I never can understand how some people always know what other people's children are up to—I'm always too occupied in minding my own affairs to notice whether others are attending to theirs or not."

"Well, don't burst a blood vessel, darling," said husband, mildly, "I'm sorry I spoke; but, really, I don't blame you, for it is annoying."

"'Annoying' is good," I said, with a forced smile. "Maddening is the word. It's a pity I wouldn't give all my attention to Jessamine Jones and her friends—I certainly don't expect the honorable Mrs. J. to watch my two all day long and I tell you now, Garret VanClief, and I mean what I say, I will tolerate almost any fault in my children that cannot be overcome, but tale-bearing and putting blame on others I *will* not stand."



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"Agreed," said Garry. "You may count on my co-operation," and we dropped the subject."

Of course, I just wrote you several reams yesterday but I simply had to get the above sentiments out of my system, consequently, another letter today. The suffrage club met at Anne's yesterday and it's going to be a great thing for this old town. By the way, did I tell you that Anne, Roberta and Letty went in town one day last week and spoke to the public on one of the busiest corners in the city at the busiest hour of the day? There are those who might call it unwomanly but they do not know whereof they speak, for, in reality, it was one of the bravest and most beautiful things ever done *by women for women* in the history of the city. I'm not an out and out suffragist or suffragette or whatever you call it, but I'm keenly interested in it all and am trying to find out all that there is in it. And really nothing makes me so peevish as to hear that it takes women from their homes and all that sort of talk. If going to the polls once a year will take women away from their homes more than the bridge clubs and federations and the million and one other affairs that the majority belong to, why I'd like to know it. And if a woman isn't big enough, broad enough and clever enough to be able to give a little thought and interest to the unprotected women who, mayhap, do not live the sheltered life that she does, why her vote wouldn't be worth much, anyway. I don't want to vote, goodness knows, but I would like the privilege for those who do want and need it.

Anne said that while they were speaking all the men in the crowd were most gentlemanly and deferential and that they made it easy and pleasant for her to do what she did for her sisters in the big, big world.

Young Len Watson lunched with me yesterday and, really, I think he does possess a few lovable characteristics—he's perfectly dear with the children and read to them for hours and he has also been a great help to his grandmother, having painted floors until he's blue in the face, or rather, green, for that's the color selected, I believe.

The Appletons are coming out in the fall and I think I will give a little tea for Mrs. A. as a passport to the "colony." She was tennis champion at Wellesley during her entire course there and I know everybody will like her. Some people named Lamb have come here lately and taken that fascinating Swiss chalet that you noticed particularly when we took that long jaunt the day after you came. Mrs. Lamb



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strikes me as being anything but a kindred soul but has named her house "The Fold" so has a faint idea of the fitness of things at least. *Her* name is anything but consistent, however, for docility is not her long suit and if it's true that the meek shall inherit the earth I'm very much afraid that Mrs. Lamb and all of her ilk will miss out considerably in the final division of the property. I called politely and she promptly returned the compliment but I'm sure she'll never make a real "colony-ite." She certainly has the sharpest tongue and most aggressive manner and decided views that I have yet come in contact with. I saw a little thing in one of the magazines lately that fits her exactly—it ran something like this—"Some caustic people invariably brag that they always hit the nail on the head, not knowing that it would be more courteous to miss it occasionally." N'est pas?

I've been scribbling for hours so must fly back to my post at the sewing machine, for just a few more days and then—all aboard for the wilds of northern Canada.

HAILEYBURY, COBALT REGION, ONTARIO, CANADA.

July 5.

Greetings from the North Pole! I've already found a box of stale sandwiches that Dr. Cook left behind him and an old shoe that I know belongs to Bob Peary. We've been here all this time and I've not yet written a letter but, dear, it's one continual rush and tear and I've certainly done my duty in the postal card line. Karl met us in Toronto, you know, and added greatly to the pleasure of the trip by his presence. Charley of the anti-meat society didn't materialize, however, for which relief much thanks. I will endeavor to give you a detailed account of the happenings up-to-date and crave your leniency if my little chronicle is not a scintillating narrative but a plain, unvarnished tale.

We left Toronto about ten P. M.—a jumble of suit cases, babies, umbrellas, magazines and all traveling paraphernalia, and reached North Bay about dawn; there they attached the diner so we all arose and dressed and after a most delectable breakfast, settled back to enjoy the scenery. "O, look at the lake," shrieked Phil as a tiny body of water came into view. "O, that's nothing; I can see two on this side," said Nancy loftily, going him one better as she always does. "Two?" echoed Karl, in amazement, before we had



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gone much farther, "why, they're as thick as mosquitoes on a sultry July night." And sure enough, there was a lakelet every few rods along the way. O, it was lovely, Virginia; hundreds of tiny toy lakes sparkling in the sunlight and bordered by countless little pine trees that were reflected in the shimmery surface of the water. Hardly a sign of civilization for the entire one hundred and fifty miles but a few straggly little settlements, which were mostly lumber camps.

Cobalt is a typical mining town they tell me and is *not* beautiful, to let it down gently; a large tin-looking hotel and funny huts and shacks and stores and more men congregated in one spot than I ever saw in all my life before. Really, a man has a lot of assurance to marry a girl and take her to such a place and yet those same brides enjoy it, they say, and wouldn't come back to common, everyday civilization for anything. Half an hour more and we were in Haileybury and everybody was laughing and crying on everybody's else shoulders. Mother and Daddy looked so good to us and Loring was the *handsomest* thing, in soft blue shirt, baggy trousers and high tan leggings which all the lads wear "prospecting"—or so they say, but I notice they pose in the picturesque out-fit most of the time.

The house is very attractive—low, broad and home-like, and while the town itself is hideously bare and homely, the location is superb; it's on the side of a hill which slopes gently down to Lake Temiskaming, the latter being ninety-two miles long and unbelievably deep. And you needn't waste any more of your perfectly good sympathy on our precious parents at all, for they are not in any need of it, believe me. It's all very well to talk about the Canadian wilderness and the frozen north, et cetera, but when one casts one's eyes upon the luxuries that they all have at their command, one's erstwhile pity turns to envy and one expresses the thought—"Verily, this is a haven where I would be." Electric lights, trolley cars, golf club, up-to-date piano stores and florist shops and fresh Huyler's from Toronto every morning; these little items merely give one an inkling of the true state of affairs.

Of course, it's wild and woolly, too, and early the other morning we saw a big moose come out of the thick brush woods and steal through the silver mist for a dip in the lake. And not long ago Loring and some of the miners met



a mamma bear with two cunning baby bears prancing along, as they were wending their rough and stony way to one of the mines.

Little Sally Jones is all that I thought she was and more; Loring, with all his ravings, didn't half do her justice. Gracia Denton is a wonderfully fine girl and Cynthia Dayre is just the style that you admire—a perfect Gibson type. It seems as if I had known these girls and so many of the other Haileyburians all my life from hearing so much of them from the family. Mother has charming neighbors, a young Mr. and Mrs. Hayes from Harrisburg, who have a motor boat, a victrola, three maids and a young son who keeps all hands busy on all occasions. We have had great sport in Dad's new launch and on Monday some of us went to South Lorrain, twenty miles down the lake, in it and then hit the trail and spent the night in the bush. We wanted the experience and it wasn't bad at all for the shack down at the mines is as comfortable and up-to-date as lots of the so-called bungalows and summer cottages that dot the tranquil shores of our own Lake Erie. The ride down was wonderful, all sorts of interesting things claiming our attention every minute. I tell you I felt very small and insignificant as we glided past Devil's Rock, a sheer wall of stone rising majestically up from the deep green water several hundred feet. Its face is ornamented by quaint natural carvings—an Indian, poised with arrow, a wild beast or two and some ancient hieroglyphics. Further along was the "Old Mission" established years ago by French Jesuit priests. On the return trip next day, we stopped at the tiny French Canadian town of Ville Marie, at one of its *three* hotels, if you please. Up on a hill, back of the village, is an old stone shrine called the "Grotto" and at certain times and seasons, the peasants toil up there and tell their beads in the shadow of the cross.

The launch is a beauty and holds thirty easily and it's fitted out with folding tables and chairs, compartments for food and water and everything else imaginable; the only incongruity is its perfectly idiotic name—the "Maybelle." Dad would like to call it the "Margarita" for mother, of course, but is foolishly superstitious about changing the name of a boat and this one was already christened when purchased. I tell Dad it's that wild Irish streak in him cropping out as it does once in a while, but he only laughs and says that he hasn't a single ancestor who ever saw the shores of Erin. Certainly mother has, though, or else they



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got me at the Church Home. Isn't Dad a wonder, though? The dearest, biggest-hearted, finest father that an undeserving creature like me ever had, and that's not telling the half.

Nancy and Philip are veritable water babies and spend most of their time splashing in the lake, which is at our very door step. We grown-ups (?) also seem to manage to put in a good bit of time doing the aquatic act. I can swim like a fish when I adorn myself with water wings but I go down like a lump of lead without them. My son—my baby was five yesterday—really, I must be sending for some college catalogues soon.

Such interesting people as one meets here; lots of Canadians, of course, and also natives of every corner of the world. A most Cosmopolitan collection, indeed. The town is yet young and crude in a way, having only boomed since the silver fever struck the neighborhood, though in reality a tiny Haileybury, a few houses and stores, has been here for some twenty years and was one of the trading posts connected with the Hudson Bay Stations. The manner in which the Canadian pronounce 'girl' is just too pretty. And, instead of saying that a thing is very nice or quite satisfactory, they agree that it's "not too bad." Isn't that unique?

In the evenings, after a ride on the lake, we all sit on the big veranda and look across the water at the twinkling lights of Gigue (pronounced "Gig") and other little hamlets, the whole vista being further enhanced by the rays of the moon, which is now at its full, a shining ball of silver in the northern sky.

I have had nothing much from Stormfield but a few unsatisfactory postals—if I don't hear from Rachel before long I will begin to fear something has happened. Our children call this metropolis "Hurley-Burley"—a most appropriate name, indeed.

"HURLEY-BURLEY", July 13.

The news in Billy's letter made me just sick—how on earth could you sprain your ankle getting into the machine? I am so sorry and hope it will be all right in a jiffy. I shall wield my pen fast and furiously and write often and tell you every little thing to help pass the tedious time. A letter from Rachel came yesterday and I read of awful heartaches and loneliness between the lines. I fear she is weakening and I wish she would; such courage and strength of purpose I never saw and it tires me to think of it. The water is so



blue today and is dotted over with gay motor boats which dart up and down the lake like spry little ants or chipper little squirrels, while graceful canoes, guided by pretty girls and flannel-clad men, glide swiftly across the azure surface, the whole a panorama of true summer delights. Our fine times continue and how we all wish you were here to enjoy them with us.

Yesterday was the Golf Club tea and instead of being the proper and rather formal affair planned, it evolved itself into a rollicking circus; we had a society baseball game and I ruined a perfectly good linen frock sliding to second, but I simply had to get there.

The club house itself is only as big as a minute but is a perfect little craftsman gem in the most exquisite setting imaginable. It perches on the crest of a hill which is itself a promontory, and from its windows, veranda and surroundings, your view takes in the province of Quebec with its quaint townlets nestled in the valleys. We stayed for dancing in the evening and as dusk fell, the wondrous beauty of the Northern Lights on the water was a thing to be remembered and treasured always—the various hues shaded from palest pink to deepest rose—most delicate green to rich dark emerald, primrose yellow to glowing flame color and soft amethyst darkening into royal purple, all blended together in a wonderful opalescent harmony of color that seemed to steal up over the misty blue hills and spread itself lavishly over the calm surface of the lake. I don't wonder that Henry Drummond wrote some of his greatest poems up in this region; anyone with the least bit of poetry in his nature would be inspired to do great things; and to think that Drummond died up here—O, the pity of it!

Really there is something about this country that bewitches one. The south is adorable with its balmy air and indolence, the west is alluring and wonderful with its spirit of ambition and eagerness, the east is charming with its old-world elegance and refinement, but O, the North! The North casts a spell at once mysterious and fascinating and which cannot be denied. A man goes up there to look over the ground; he is attracted, he hesitates and he is lost, or his heart is lost, to the wilderness, the life-giving air, the color, the spirit and the magic of the North.

What impresses me greatly is the gallantry and chivalry of the men up here, particularly the Canadians; such devotion and attentiveness to the women! Yesterday we didn't





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## A BIT O' SILENCE

have to lift our eyebrows but were waited on hand and foot by the lads, who looked stunning in white ducks, blue serge coats and tennis shoes; the women did not have to beg and urge them to do things, either, but when some one suggested supper they arose with one accord, dropped everything at hand and brought out table, chairs, dishes and food and passed the latter with much deftness. There are some fine golf players among the members—R. Herbert Jones, one of the barristers (we would say “lawyer” in “the States”), beating Mrs. Jack Wesley yesterday by a score of 2 up and 1 to play. They are real men too, and not a bit effeminate. It’s nothing to make so much fuss about, I suppose, but our men are so slow generally and leave everything from the getting up of the parties to the hauling of the chairs to the girls. Pardon the slam, American boys, but you *are* lazy. Sally Jones and Gracia are delightfully refreshing—I must ask them both to visit me sometime. Karl seems to be more than necessarily interested in Miss Denton—good thing, I’ll help it along, for Karl is a darling and I’d hate to have him follow in Uncle Jim’s footsteps and deprive some girl of a perfectly good husband, until he’s almost (not quite) too old to be interested in the game of life from the viewpoint of one of the participants but merely content to look on from a stage box.

Tomorrow we all go down to Brown’s Island in the “May-belle” (really, I’d almost think she’d feel too silly to float, with that name) and the men of Mrs. Dexter Vale’s house-party spent this entire morning overhauling the craft, while Mother and I sat on the dock and directed the proceedings. My dear, if you could have seen our handsome Loring scouring the windows with bon ami—Garry and Karl on their knees for hours cleaning the engine and Uncle Jim mending little rips in the leather cushions, you would have howled. All of them would groan loudly if we ventured to ask them to clean the veranda or water the lawn and they only cut the grass under protest, but they’d give their life’s blood for that old boat, I verily believe.

“Why doesn’t Dad lend a mitt?” asked Loring, loftily, as he scrubbed away vigorously. “I like the way he lets us do all the dirty work while he puffs away on a twenty-five cent straight and reads the papers.”

“Everybody works but father,” I trilled from my vantage point on the edge of the dock and we all began attacking the dear man but mother took us off our perch speedily.



## A BIT O' SILENCE

"I'm ashamed of you all," she said sternly. "Do let your poor father rest once in a while, I'm sure he deserves it—he provided the boat for you to clean and also to have a good time with, and likewise everything else you have." And she took up her book and began reading intently.

"Squelched," said Loring meekly, and we all felt about an inch and three-quarters in height and said no more on the subject of Dad's delinquencies.

I never saw the lake prettier and the boat bobbed up and down merrily as the lads worked away. "Now, if Anne and Rachel and some of the other dear Stormfield people were here this whole thing would be absolute perfection," I said, drinking in the beauty and freshness of the sparkling morning and thrilled with happiness and the joy of just living.

"I would love to meet all your friends in Stormfield," said mother heartily, "they must be more than attractive."

"Attractive!" chorused Garry, Loring, Uncle Jim and I, "They're the salt of the earth—they're in a class by themselves—to be exact, they're 'it.'"

"Rachel is so adorable," I enthused, "and the little mystery about her lends an extra touch of fascination and Anne is wonderful—"

"And Patty," broke in Garry—"don't forget an extra special little eulogy on Patty."

"I should say not," cried Loring, vehemently, "she's got it—you bet."

"Got what?" echoed mother with a trace of nervousness in her voice, not quite certain, I presume, whether he was referring to a particular virtue or a contagious disease.

"That's what I mean, she's got it," repeated brother, "why, you know, she's a queen, a winner, she's it—some class, the goods, got them all skinned—why I can't explain any better than that," he concluded.

"He is speaking in the vernacular of the modern college man," I tried to explain—"to say of a girl that 'she's got it' is saying the last word as regard homage, glorification and praise."

"Well, I declare," said our gentle mother, "the youth of today speak an entirely different language—I wonder that any of the older generation understand a word they say."

"There's a possibility that the 'youth' would just as soon they didn't," I suggested and mother had to smile.

Sally and Gracia are going down with us tomorrow—also young Mr. and Mrs. Hayes and their hopeful next door, and



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Cynthia, her brother Barclay and a perfect dream of a cousin—a West Point cadet, and last but not least, "Peer Gynt," their dog (he's a prize Boston bull and they wouldn't stir a step without him—I expect they'll try to smuggle him past St. Peter when the time comes.) O, I believe Mrs. Reggie French is also going; her three youngsters are down in Toronto visiting their grandmother and her husband is up at Porcupine, so mother invited her. She's a perfect scream, says the drollest things and is extremely stylish. So with all from the Vale mansion there will be quite a crowd, as 'twere, but the more the merrier and the boat is enormous. I am so anxious to see Brown's Island; it and the beautiful house on it were owned by a multi-millionaire of Philadelphia, who used to come up here every summer with a party of congenial spirits, I'm told. I asked last night at Sally's bridge party why he sold the thing if it's so awfully attractive and Dad says it was because Haileybury was building up so rapidly Mr. Millions didn't want to be so near civilization—Dad says he hears that Mr. Brown is now looking around for a suitable spot in the vicinity of the North Pole where he may live in peace and quiet, with an occasional house-party to stir things up.

Karl ventured the remark that he couldn't conceive of any man's being contented in such a quiet, out-of-the-way place as the island, whereupon Loring said dryly, "O, but recollect where he came from" and hardly were the words out of his mouth before he remembered that Clark Hamilton the Dayre cadet cousin, who was among those present, was also from the Quaker City. Brother's discomfiture can better be imagined than described. I positively must give my pen a rest (not to mention your poor brain) and go down to the dock, over the edge of which my beautiful son and daughter are dangling this very minute.

BROWN'S ISLAND,

Thursday morning, July 14.

You can't be any more surprised to hear from me from this isolated spot than I am to be here, but just as we were about to start for home last night and had managed to get everything and everybody, including the "hund," safely aboard, the Maybelle absolutely refused to stir and after the combined but futile efforts on the part of the men to budge the stubborn creature, they decided to give it up as a bad



job. Then she would sort of go backwards for a while and stop short; Karl suggested heading her down the lake and maybe we would get home that way, a la the old horse in "David Harum," who always backed into his destination—but we gave up all attempts after a while and spent the night Robinson Crusoe effect on the island. All the small craft had gone up the lake for the night and the big boats run only every other day and of course yesterday wasn't the day—there will be some going up this afternoon, however, so we won't be stranded indefinitely. Of course, we aren't at the mercy of the elements exactly for the caretaker was most generous and placed the whole big house at our disposal and anyway it was about 80 in the shade all day and the evening was quite balmy. At the present writing Garry and Clark Hamilton are scouring the island for wild game and I hope they find some soon for Gracia and Mrs. French have just announced that luncheon is almost ready. All day yesterday and so far today we have had sardines and crackers and crackers and sardines but we announce "Sardines, a la King," "Sardines Newburg," "Scalloped sardines," and "Sardines a la Haileybury," and it seems to go. Dad certainly has the Maybelle well "canned" but why he couldn't have branched out a little in the variety line I don't know. I refused to work and told them all that you were an invalid and had to be amused and the men all donated every spare sheet of paper in their memorandum books—did you ever see such a heterogeneous collection? I keep Barclay busy sharpening pencils for I seem to wear down a pencil point in an incredibly short space of time. Cynthia is nurse maid and has her hands full keeping Nancy, Phil and the Hayes youngster from falling into the lake. Loring is assistant dish washer but seems quite delighted with the job for Sally is at the helm and Loring is not absolutely indifferent to her many charms, it seems! Ben Hayes, Uncle Jim and Karl keep tinkering with the engine but at last reports weren't an inch further than they were last night. Dad has been fishing all morning and here am I, roosting on a huge flat rock writing to you. I think I have now accounted for everybody and we are all perfectly happy except for the fact that all our families in Haileybury may be worrying about us. Dad says he knows they aren't, however, for when the last small boat went up last evening just as we were attempting to start, some of the Haileybury men, noticing our lads puffing and



## A BIT O' SILENCE

steaming, called out, "What's the matter? Can't you get her started?"

"O, my yes," Dad answered, "We're just doing this to amuse the little fishes." They didn't think it was serious, evidently, and went right on, but they will of course tell mother and the rest that we are all right.

How Mr. Brown ever gave up this place I can't imagine—it is alone on the island, save for the care-taker's shack, and is most alluring-looking, back among the pine trees and blue berry bushes, the latter growing in a tangled mass all over the island. The house is built of stone and dark red shingles and has a number of picturesque gables. It consists of a huge living room with low, broad windows and an immense fireplace and on the lintel is carved "As I muse, the fire burns"; a spacious dining room, ornamented with deer heads and paneled in mahogany, a card room, a billiard room, kitchen, etc., and nine bedrooms which are partly furnished. The rugs are gone and the chairs but we didn't mind for the beds had mattresses and we used coats and things for bed-clothes. I must attend to the last call for dinner in the dining room—it's to be a standing luncheon, I believe.

*Later.* We feasted royally on sardines a la can, crackers and coffee and some delicious fresh bread that the care-taker man *made* this morning. I will proceed with this modern version of the Swiss family Robinson. We kept the Regina music box going madly last night, and had a perfect Charity Ball. The thing was squeaky and out of date and some of the things were awful but we wrung out "Blue Danube" and a few other good waltzes that were within our recollection.

"That's a cheerful dirge," remarked Clark, as the Regina began on a doleful number that made one think of Eliza crossing the ice, but after dissecting the thing and putting it to vote we discovered that it was "Teasing, teasing, I am only teasing you" and as it then burst into a perfectly bully two-step we decided that it had been. The night was a miserable failure as regards restfulness for sleep was out of the question. Young Hayes shrieked until early dawn for his own crib and the combined efforts and bribes of the entire party couldn't quiet him. Peer Gynt, in his capacity of watch dog, did his duty with a vengeance and barked at the rustle of every leaf and Nancy and Phil couldn't be induced to close an eye for hours, for fear they would miss something, while as for the lads—! They kept up a running fire of



idiotic conversation all night and nearly drove us to distraction.

"That actress in room 16 wants two gin fizzes," Loring called out, just as we were sinking into a much coveted doze.

"Well, take them up to her yourself and tell her not to forget to tip the buttons," answered Karl. Then—"I suppose they are going to give us some of that almost food for breakfast," from Uncle Jim. "No, I think not—it's to be near-pancakes, I believe," answered Barclay—and that's the way it went all night. About four I got *mad*—rip-roaring mad and gave them a curtain lecture.

"Don't exert yourselves," I admonished, from the folds of Garry's raincoat, as I stood in the doorway, "those witticisms of yours are almost too brilliant—they might injure your brains if you have any and they're old as the hills, besides."

"Well, you haven't any kick coming, Nan," said Loring, "I distinctly remember hearing you suggest some one's getting a basket when Mrs. Reggie spilled all the cards last night, and that's the worst ever."

"You never did," I retorted, "I was speaking of something else and anyway that isn't one tenth as pathetic as the time worn one you got off the other day when you asked Mrs. Hayes if she was breaking up housekeeping just because something dropped—that was the extension of the limit. You certainly are hopeless, Loring, there's no doubt about it."

"Well, positively, Nan, it's astonishing the way you criticised any and everybody and have such an exalted opinion of your own cleverness," came Loring's retort from over the transom (he was getting sleepy himself). "You'll never set the world on fire, yourself."

"Maybe not," I replied, "but a few know I'm here, though," was my parting shot and I slammed the door and peace and quiet reigned supreme thereafter.

There would be more of a variety in the menus only that everybody became famished on the way down and devoured ravenously. However, the bananas lasted until this morning, also the cake and olives and there's enough coffee for a regiment, not forgetting the ubiquitous sardines.

I keep thinking of Rachel and wondering if she misses us and how she lives and keeps up her courage and where her Phil is and why he left her or she him and the darling baby child and all about it but I have "one of my premonitions" that the end is in sight. I know it.



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Garry didn't stalk any big game this morning so went at the blue berries and has picked enough to keep all Haileybury in pies for a week and his hands look for all the world as though septicemia has set in.

The other girls wore dark linen frocks but I foolishly donned a white Peter Thompson and am a sight for gods and men. I wish you might see me and also have a look at Phil's white canvas sneakers. Karl just announced that the engine will go well enough now to get us up to the town so I will assist at gathering up the debris.

*And later still.* We are on the boat chugging towards "Hurley-Burley" and there is such a commotion that I can't write a word so I'll seal this and mail it directly we reach the town.

STORMFIELD, July 21.

Quite a jump you're thinking and indeed it is but here we are bag and baggage, and here we'll stay for quite a spell, I trust. The whole thing from beginning to end was delightful but, as is always the case in every trip, the home-coming is the very best of all, or rather, the "reaching home," for the "coming"—the "en route" portion—was anything but pleasant. The Grand Trunk strike was on and we had to go ninety miles out of our way to get to Toronto, while the sleeper was of the vintage of 1812. Then we had to come over from Toronto by boat, which in itself was no hardship but caused numerous complications in regard to baggage and we didn't get our trunks until yesterday.

The reason that you didn't hear of our intended departure is that when we reached the house after our slightly delayed trip up from Brown's Island we were greeted by a telegram from Garry's office requesting his return as soon as possible as he was needed on an important case. Garry gazed at it and then turned away sadly. "There's nothing to do but to pack up and go," he lamented, "for I simply cannot afford to pass the thing up for it means a lot of shekels in my pocket, no matter how it turns out."

"O, well, I knew that something would occur before long to sort of even things up—we were having too good a time to last," I said, "it's the sort of thing that's always happening to me, you know—I believe I was the original Eve and was chased out of the Garden of Eden and have been told to 'move on' ever since. If I ever get to Heaven (which I won't) I'll probably just have my trunk unpacked and my



clothes hung up when I'll be informed that I'm wanted somewhere else."

"Undoubtedly," agreed Loring languidly, "unless you arrive at the shining portal just in time to see it go up in smoke—that would be more like it."

"You exaggerate I'm sure," admonished mother, "and if things of that sort are always happening to you I would suggest that it is partly the influence of your mind and that you cause these things to be—to a certain extent—by allowing your thoughts to dwell upon them."

"You're in wrong there, mother dear," said Garry, not quite certain, I guess, whether she was in jest or earnest, "for I'll back Nancy up by saying that fate certainly has it in for her most of the time, but she never lets it deter her in any way from going right ahead with the next thing on the programme of the day's work but enters into each new thing with whole-hearted enthusiasm and fearlessness." (Here Garry mopped his brow).

"Listen to the model husband," cried Karl, while I embraced my champion and then dashed in to pack.

I had telegraphed Norah that we were coming and when we arrived we found the house open and fresh and Anne, Patty and Rachel here to greet us.

Rachel looks wan and pale and worries us all not a little—I am glad we are where we can get to her easily and quickly if she should want us.

Our coming away was not without pangs of regret for we hated awfully to leave our "ownest" ones, while "the lure of the North" is still with us... It is amusing to hear the Stormfield people questioning us about the place and really it is surprising to discover how few know where Cobalt really is—they have an idea that it is in Alaska or Greenland and that the natives ride on dog-sledges and eat tallow dips.

"Didn't you almost freeze to death?" asked Esther Lane, and I lay back and fanned myself as I thought of the walk along the beach to the Golf Club—at ninety in the shade.

I took Philip to the barber's yesterday and had his adorable hair cut off; I hated to do it but he is getting so big and husky that it looked silly. On the way home he insisted upon going into the drug store for a glass of water and when I objected on the plea that I didn't like to ask for a glass of water without buying a soda, which I would *not* do, he said, "Why mother, just take me in by the hand and say 'this



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wicked child of mine is *bound* to have a drink' and they won't say nuffin, they'll be so sorry for you." He got the drink.

The sunrise over the Concord Hills this morning surpassed in gorgeousness anything that I have ever seen in my life. I happened to be up very early, as Nancy was restless, and looking out of the east window in the hall, was spell-bound by the beauty of it. How *can* people live in the crowded city when there is so much wonderful open country!

Dora Kauffman gave a veranda party last evening and we had a jolly time, though Bruce elected to play the heavy tragedy role with a face about a mile long and that dampened our spirits somewhat. He is really in love with Gilbertine but hasn't sense enough to know it and Gilbertine is wise and is biding her time, having the discernment to distinguish between fascination for an ideal and real love for a real girl and knowing that all is coming out right in the end.

Kate Watson came home with us for the night, observing that if some of the neighbors didn't take her in she'd have to spend the night standing up as her house was full of guests, uninvited as far as she was concerned. The coolness with which those Watson children install their young friends as house guests without consulting their mother is astounding. Kate says she frequently discovers two or three of Cary Felice's playmates sleeping the sleep of the unconcerned in her own good bed when she drags her weary self upstairs at night. But it really doesn't bother her to any great extent, but nothing ever does for that matter. Kate is the most perfect example of the "triumph of mind over matter" that exists today, I'll be bound.

By the way, the Tennant girls are going away this fall—Patty to Wellesley and Shirley to a beautiful school in Connecticut. Both won scholarships and Patty had another offered to her but refused it perforce; we are all so delighted, for they deserve it richly. Garry told Anne that he'd heard of linen showers and a dozen other kinds of showers, but a scholarship shower was a new one on him. Anne is so proud of her lovely daughters and beamed upon us all yesterday as she dispensed tea and toast to the assemblage that had collected to hear the good news.. She has a stunning tea cart which has no rest from its labors. Kate has named it "Meeny" for no rhyme or reason and Meeny belongs to the colony, together with the cats, dogs, birds, horses, poll-parrots and baby carriages that are life members. I should amend my statement concerning the refreshments and say



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that she *planned* to dispense tea and toast but was obliged to produce lemonade, ginger ale and crackers to the ones who are always "simply dying of heat," while the original menu was disposed of by "us cold ones." We are divided into two distinct classes out here—the ones who are always cold and who demand warm drinks, food, houses and weather, and the others who go about shedding garments, opening windows, fanning themselves and gulping down ice-water. Anne, Kate and I are charter members of the tribe of "tropical devotees," while Esther, Rosamond, Elizabeth Watson and Roberta are in the other class and sigh for the frosty blast.

Of course, there are some plain everyday human beings such as Letty, Sally and Frances who can adjust themselves to their environment but "far be it from sich" with the rest of us—we want what we want when we want it and we all try to get it and dissension reigns supreme. I told the girls yesterday that I was going to give my parties on the installment plan after this and try to make everybody happy. "I'll invite the Royal Order of Esquimaux on a freezing January night," I said, "then I'll turn out the furnace, open all the windows and serve iced food and drinks, then get under several layers of eiderdown and wish you joy; and the nice sensible ones," I continued, "I'll bid make merry on a sweltering night in July and will regale them with steaming coffee and scalloped things."

All agreed that the idea was capital save Kate.

"Well, I don't want to miss out on anything, ever, you know, Nancy," she said, "so invite me to the cold party, too, and I'll wear my fur lingerie, carry an oil stove and promise not to put both feet in the fire-place at once."

August 4.

Among the numerous things on Garry's list (a most essential part of a commuter's assets) today, appears this item: "Order Motto for Kate," which, interpreted, means that husband is to go to a printing shop and order a large piece of pasteboard with these words in deepest black—"LEST WE FORGET"—with humble apologies to Rudyard. The wherefore being that Kate seems to need a gentle reminder at all times and an occasional rather rigid one that "all things will not always come to him who waits," without some slight assistance on the part of the patient one, particularly if the "things" happen to be dinner guests and the one who waits has neglected to invite them. For that is precisely what hap-



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pened at Buttercup last evening and the consternation and chagrin depicted on Kate's pretty face when the awful truth burst upon her were perfectly killing. She decided last week that she *must* have the Larrabees to dinner and broached the subject at a little telephone tea that I had on the spur of the moment—Ethel and Natalie having come out in their new car.

"I shall ask Mr. and Mrs. Larrabee as the guests of honor, the poor souls have been so very decent to me and to my family, and I want you and Garry, Anne and Dick, and Bob and Rosamond to consider yourselves invited also—to supply the necessary balance, as it were, to counteract or compensate or anything you please. I don't really want any of you others but must ask somebody and you all are the kind that fit in anywhere and can adjust yourselves to any condition, even a Larrabee evening."

"Well, it seems that Kate, Gilbertine and Sylvia brewed and baked all day and everything was in readiness when the six of us presented ourselves in best bib and tucker on the stroke of seven. Kate looked at us, then at the clock and sank to the floor with a dull and sickening thud.

"Glory be," she almost moaned, "I forgot to invite them—the Larrabees—the 'jests' of honor—and I *didn't want* you fiends incarnate. I only asked you to help out—go home, every one of you—what will I forget next? My head, I guess." And she sank lower still and refused to be comforted.

"Go home!" echoed Anne, "Well, I guess not—not when we know that chicken a la King, and one of the famous Watson salads are in readiness—come, Katydid, arise and shine in the capacity of gracious hostess and bid your little friends welcome and urge them to devour."

We were almost in fits by this time and Kate, with her usual buoyancy of spirit, joined in and the party was a howling success. When we were taking our reluctant departure sometime after midnight, I heard Garry promise Kate that he would bring her a little motto tonight that would look well over the kitchen sink and might avert many a tragedy in the future.

After some exciting singles on the Hastings tennis-court yesterday, Anne's six-footer and I sank down exhausted on the soft grass of the apple orchard and regaled ourselves with iced tea (which I loathe) and lemonade (which I de-



test but had to drink as Roxane refused to concoct any hot beverages on such a sweltering day even at the risk of losing my esteem).

"Dickie-child," I said when I regained my lost breath, "tell me something funny or something."

"Honestly, Nancy, you make me tired, grumbled Dick. "I'm not funny and never will be but you always expect me to amuse you."

"You ought to be willing to make some slight return for the privilege of basking in my presence," I retorted, "and you *can* be most entertaining if you'll only exert yourself a bit—and you aren't obliged to tell me that I make you tired even if I do," I added in an injured tone.

"A thousand pardons, Mrs. Van," said Dick, effusively, "I will endeavor to entertain you with some of my scintillating wit to atone for my rudeness; but do you know you make me think of Shirley when she was a "weent," as Sylvia says. She used to hurl herself into father's lap and say 'Tell me a story read me things draw me things' all in one breath so that if parent were not in the mood to do one he might take his choice of the other two."

"Here comes the tactful sister now so I'll let you off this time," I said, as a maiden in palest green appeared at the entrance to the orchard and O! Virginia, what a sight she was—beautiful always is Shirley Tennant, but in the sea-foam gown, flecks of golden sunlight glinting through the dancing leaves on her hair and framed in a setting of graceful, bending trees, she defied all description. Leigh Hunt must have been inspired by a similar vision when he said, "A girl is the sweetest thing God ever made."

Your letter was more than welcome and so very interesting but I would urge you to waste no time telling me of the varieties of mischief into which a baby girl of one year and four months can get herself. I know all about it, love, having been through the mill and it is really the very hardest time of all babyhood for the mother—very different indeed from the 'long-dress' period when they 'stay put.' But a baby just beginning to walk is so very adorable that we try not to notice the spilled ink, the overturned baskets and the table covers hastily removed and forcibly downing a wild desire to beat our offspring to a pulp we hug the precious culprit to our bosom with a wave of joy that we have such a wonderful gift in our possession. You say that I never mention the Grangers which makes me think that they are away for the



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summer, visiting Connie's mother and an occasional postal to various members of the colony tells us that they are both well save for Marshall's rheumatism which sticks closer than a brother. I tremble for his raven locks which are probably growing prodigiously while he is laid up—he'll be a perfect Paderewski when he returns, I'm afraid.

Mr. Dieffenbach happened in this morning and casually mentioned that he was going to build up an entire new street in the spring as soon as it is cut through. Nancy stood listening intently, much impressed by his allusions to his numerous possessions and after he had gone, turned to me with an incredulous look in her eyes.

"Mother," she asked, in an awed whisper, "does Mr. Dieffenbach own property in Heaven, too?"

She is the next hostess for her sewing club I believe and asked if she might ask a few extra friends and on gaining my permission, wrote the invitations, an example of which I give herewith—it is brief and to the point. Mayhap I may live to be the parent of a female barrister. It ran:

"DEAR DOROTHY,—

Am giving a sewing club Sat. Would like much to have you come, to,—We vote for a president. be hear at too sharp for I expect a big bunch of kids, there will be food, yours truly

NANCY GARRET VAN CLIEF.

She said she would like, if it isn't too much trouble, to have a candlestick and a "favrite" (favor) at each place.

I happened to mention last night that I was going to call on some new people in town and suggested that the others accompany me and Anne literally leaped upon me.

"Count me out," she said decidedly, "nothing like that in our family and you be careful, yourself, Nancy my child, or you'll be getting as bad as Mrs. Larrabee, the 'almost guest'; the minute a new family arrives Mrs. L. is johnny on the spot with her white gloves and pasteboard—they move her in with the stove; but mark my words, some day she'll be too fore-handed and land there before the furniture." And she spoke truly; I must watch out that I don't overdo the friendly act for I presume even the loneliest newcomer would like to get her breath and put down a rug or two before meeting strangers.

I went into town last week to a bridge luncheon that Mai Travers gave for some out-of-town girls and on Monday at



the Metaphysical Club meeting, before we got down to serious "phizzing" I brought up the subject of the clothes worn by the girl of the present day and the air was rent with exclamations of disapproval.

"It is getting to be a mighty serious question," said Rosamond, gravely. "No matter what the season or where you go, you are fairly dazzled by the garments of the American maids and matrons."

Mai was simply dressed in a dainty muslin and was as bright and witty and ridiculous as ever. Mrs. Travers never having met some of the out-of-town girls, Mai was obliged to introduce her and you know how she hates to introduce people.

"Girls," she said, doing it all up at once, "may I present my mother, Mrs. Travers, father's first wife." And I declare those creatures were bewildered. A little bride from Chicago asked me afterwards how many more wives there were and which one the father lived with. But to get back to the subject of clothes—my dear, I gazed around the rooms at Irish lace robes, flame colored chiffons, magnificent Egyptian embroideries and picture hats fairly dangling with willow plumes at \$50 per wil, until I couldn't see. And then the rosebuds, the orchids, the jewels and the French heels, to say nothing of the limousines and victorias that stood three deep outside! I had to leave early to catch my train and I bade them a fond farewell.

"This is no place for me, girls," I said. "back to Stormfield and the simple life—Au Revoir!"

"Yes indeed, it's awful," agreed Anne when I had described the scene of splendor, "it's a calamity, that's what it is and I don't know what the world is coming to and no matter how fine and broad a girl is, she can't help being a tiny bit dissatisfied at the luxury she sees on every hand."

"They're overdoing it—that's all," said Kate, "as they're overdoing everything else. This is the age of extremes, you know, and the great mass of humanity doesn't seem able to distinguish the delicate line between insufficiency and superfluity which is the golden means of temperance and judgment."

"The Earl of Chesterfield wrote a letter to a friend one March day in 1746," began Roberta in her deliberate way, "and among other philisophical sentiments was this one:



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'Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well.' Very good for Chesterfield but I am sure his idea of doing things well wouldn't coincide in the least with the present day interpretation of it, which is overdoing. And yet I heard a young woman quote those very words the other day when her father reproved her gently for putting too much time, thought and money into a gown for a certain occasion—really, girls, it's ghastly and it makes me fearful for the outcome; of course, it won't affect us in any way for we don't care a rap and have minds of our own, praise be!"

"And even the talk is exaggerated," put in Elizabeth, "and I read the other day that an eminent physician had proved that extravagance in speech is most detrimental to the physical condition of the speaker as it uses up all the reserve force that one ought to have to fall back on in case the need for it arises."

"Well, speaking of hyperbole effects in 'langwidge,, " said Rosamond, "I wish you girls might have heard the conversation between two young things of sixteen or thereabouts who sat in front of me on the 4:30 train Saturday. Anyone listening would have been convinced that if the treasures of the Orient, the seven wonders of the world or the contents of all the diamond mines of Africa lay before them they could say no more. 'And her hat, Millicent, what *did* you think of her hat?' asked one, fairly drooling in her eagerness, 'did you ever in your life behold such a dream?' 'Never, Gwen, never; positively if I live to be a thousand I never expect to see anything half so exquisite again—and that cape! O, Gwennie—that *Mandarin* cape!' and her voice was raised to a shrill scream at the last word. Gwendolyn emitted a gentle moan—yes, moan is the word," laughed Rosamond, "'I can't even speak of it,' she answered, 'but, O, Millicent, the leading man—wasn't he the very handsomest thing you ever looked at in all your life?' 'Hush—don't mention *him* again Gwen, or I shall certainly pass away,' wailed Millicent, 'but he certainly was the most adorable, gorgeous and madly fascinating creature that ever walked this earth.' And they were still at it when I got off the train," concluded Rosamond, "To the uninitiated, their conversation might suggest a hurried flight from a lunatic asylum, but no, they were two average American girls returning from the matinee."

It does make me ponder long and deeply, Virginia, and sometimes I feel that I'd like nothing better than to shout from the housetops and bid all stop and listen. In this age



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of extremes, this day of fad, this era of exaggeration, I'd like to make a universal plea for moderation and remind every one to do all things well at all times but not to lose sight of the comfortable fact that there's a happy medium.

P. S. I can see Mrs. Archibald Dill wheeling her treasure by the house as I write. I have a wild desire to go out and remove the thermometer, hot water bottle, four pillows and numerous blankets that I *know* are crowding and roasting him.

August 21.

There's a limit to all human endurance and the limit has been reached as regards mine. I can't stand the strain any longer even if Rachel can and if something doesn't happen pretty soon to put an end to this uncertainty and suspense, why I shall take a hand myself and stir things up a bit. There is positively no sense in such performances. I never before beheld such will power and strength of purpose as exemplified in Rachel Bradley and I hope I never will again—it makes me tired in more senses than one. We spent last evening at the forest hut playing bridge and Rachel acted so weary of the whole thing and doesn't seem to care whether school keeps or not, and yet won't quite give up as yet. I led from fright most of the evening and Bob Thornton doubled three distinct times on perfect Yarboroughs. O, it was a pretty party, believe me. I love Rachel dearly but I'm tired of witnessing her struggle with herself; talk about consistency and reasonableness being admirable qualities—well, I've reached the point where I'd like to see absolute inconsistency, unreasonableness and senselessness fully expressed—anything that is human and natural and weak.

As for Bruce, he seems to be getting to the end of his rope, while Gilbertine has certainly lost her heart to him, and then, possibly some other girl's heart is smashed to bits because of Bruce's indifference. To add to the general mix-up, two devoted suitors for Gilbertine's pretty hand have appeared on the scene—verily, the "tick plottens," as the funny Dutchman says in "The Fascinating Widow." Bruce is such a mixture of seriousness and levity and one never knows just how to take him.

Roberta gave a most delightful all day party on Saturday and we had a jolly time. Every member of the colony was invited regardless of age but all the youngsters were dispatched to their beds shortly after supper, in the big Lane



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hayrack and were so thrilled at the prospect of the ride that they didn't realize that they were being sent home. Esther and the doctor and Marcia Norrington didn't come until the moon had risen and we had formed a large semi-circle around the big bonfire where the men were roasting corn and almost dying of heat in the meantime, though the evening, like most August evenings was cool.

"O, look who has arrived!" said Len Watson as they joined the circle, "and may I ask, as this old Irishman did of the race-horse, 'what detained you?' "

"O, Will had to remove several ears and make over a few eyes as is usual when we want to go anywhere and I repeat for the thousandth time to the unfettered ladies present, don't *ever* marry even a plain M. D. to say nothing of a specialist."

"Do repeat that story for us, Lennie," urged Kate, "we've all heard it a million times but it is so funny."

"I haven't," stated Dora; "Nor I," said Marion Winter, so Lennie willingly complied.

"Why, this old Irishman had been touted to a good thing on his first visit to a race track," explained Len, "and had put all his coin on the promising looking two-year-old. The colt wheeled as the barrier went up and came struggling along in the ruck about the time that the jocks of the money horses were weighing out. The crestfallen Irishman walked down to the paddock later and going up to the horse, said sadly, 'Sorr, what detained you?'"

We all shrieked as hard as though we never heard it before but it is so silly.

"Coming out on the car from town yesterday there was positively the rudest conductor I ever saw," said Esther, "it's too bad I think that they aren't more gentlemenly and this one has been on the line for ages."

"Well, what can you expect?" asked Anne, "the fact that a man has been a conductor on a suburban trolley line for years demonstrates clearly that he isn't fitted for a much higher position."

"That reminds me of what old Mr. Griggs, the livery man in Buffalo once told Dad," I said. "He said that some women who had hired a victoria complained that the driver had used unseemly language and they were quite incensed. 'I told them,' said Mr. Griggs, with a twinkle in his eye, 'that I had been trying for years to get college graduates to drive my hacks but hadn't succeeded.'"



## A BIT O' SILENCE

"Bully for Griggsie," said Bruce. What do they want, I wonder—an Emerson?"

Bruce was actually handsome, leaning back in the white moonlight and we all bemoaned the fact that we had large and husky husbands and so were out of the running.

"But I've picked you for my second, Bruce," I said, "and as soon as I can dispose of Garry to advantage you will find me waiting at the church."

"Why don't you raffle Garry off?" suggested Anne, "and if you should, give me the first chance at the tickets and I'll buy them all."

"No you won't," stated Kate firmly, "there are others who have been waiting long and patiently for a husband and *they* ought to have the first chance."

"But do tell me, Bruce," I went on, "is there any hope—would you take me, just as I am, without one 'V'?—though, of course, I'd have lots of alimony."

"Nancy," began Bruce, "you're the one and only with the possible exception of Anne, Kate, Rosamond, Esther, Sally, Marcia, Frances and Roberta, and as for taking you minus a dowry—pray let Omar speak for me:

"A book of verses underneath the bough,  
A loaf of bread, a jug of wine, and thou  
Beside me, singing in the wilderness,  
O, wilderness were paradise enow."

"Cut out that twaddle, little ones," interposed Ed Lane, (fortunately for our brains) "Roberta says that it is time to eat."

"What, again?" asked Martin,—“or yet, which is it?—I never saw so many meals crowded into one day before."

"I'm stiff as a board," sighed Rosamond, as we trooped into the charming dining room, "you know old Grandpa Farrell has pursued me for weeks intent upon playing the fiddle for my delectation and last night I submitted gracefully and dragged Bob down to Bertha's (Bertha Watts, you know, Virginia, Sally's sister, who has moved here recently with her family) and we all had to dance for hours while Gramp scraped away at the rate of forty miles an hour."

"I believe you," said Dick. "We were roped in once, also, after Anne had unwittingly complimented the old man on his excellent touch."

Apropos of music, it is really remarkable the way my small daughter picks out things by ear—she takes to the



## A BIT O' SILENCE

piano as a duck takes to water, plays the air so prettily and complements it with perfectly a good bass, her tiny hands scarcely stretching as far as she would like to have them.

I believe I would write on forever, Virginia, only that I see Bruce coming down the street so will lay down my weary pen.

*Later.* My poor Bruce has just left, a sadder and a wiser man, but he's determined to try his luck, just the same. You know, it's against my principles to interfere in other people's affairs but this seemed the psychological moment to strike while the iron was hot and tell him what I know. I recounted things verbatim as I know them—the wedding ring and the locket with the baby's picture, on the chain around her neck, the inscription in the book, and Rachel's incoherent remarks when she was so ill. I felt that it was only fair to Bruce to tell him what I thought and I gave Rachel her just due by reminding Bruce that she had been supremely indifferent to him all along and had not given him one atom of encouragement.

"I know that perfectly, Nancy," he acknowledged, "but I have a queer feeling about it all and feel as if I must say something to her in regard to Gilbert—well, I just can't talk about her to anyone but this feeling that I have for Mrs. Bradley seems to dominate every thought—really I wish something would happen to clear the atmosphere."

I talked a blue streak and finally got all mixed up myself. There's been a perfect series of love affairs to untangle for other people in my experience so far and if I'm dragged into any more I'll be qualified to run a woman's exchange in a country town and that requires a greater amount of diplomacy than anything I know of. I probably haven't accomplished one thing by all my talking in this case but like the western statesman "I seen my dooty and I done it." Bruce said all he wanted was to end his misery one way or the other. I begged him to do nothing rash for a couple of weeks at least—I have a presentiment that something may develop within that time—here's hoping!

By the way, send me a little sprig of your rosemary, will you? I need it in my business.

Sept. 8.

This paper is so spotted with tears that I can scarcely write on it and please don't laugh at me, but my little boy,



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my baby child has gone to school! My weeny Philip! My heart was almost torn from its moorings last year when Nancy began her school life but I came through the ordeal bravely because I still had a child at home to pet and make a baby of but now they're both starting out and I feel lost and strange. I always had it pounded into me that school days are one's happiest days but I can't see it that way and the happiest day of my life was the one on which I received my diploma at high school, and by the skin of my teeth, at that. I think the whole thing is a long hard pull and, poor little trudgers, they have it all before them.

I'm glad that your ankle is as good as new once more and it probably would have been long ago if you weren't such a ponderous creature; there are compensations in being a feather weight, after all.

I just shrieked out of the window to a wild looking mongrel to stop tramping down my garden and immediately one of Aunt Judith's oft-repeated reproofs came to my mind—do you remember how often she used to say to you and Cousin Lois and me when we raised our voices to the highest pitch—"Children, children, lower your voices—a real lady never screams, and remember Shakespeare's words:

'Her voice was ever soft,

Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.' "

Dear Aunt Judith, would that I had paid more heed to her teachings—all of which reminds me that I owe her several letters.

I am in quite a state of nerves just now wondering how a little plan that I have in my head is going to work out—I can't tell anybody, not even you, so please don't ask. Garry says he smells a rat but I tell him it's simply the aristocratic tilt of his Grecian nose that leads him to think that he knows it all on every occasion.

Dickie Tennant is getting on my nerves, he's so good-looking; he's here a great deal and I told him the other day that there must be some awful defect somewhere that would crop out later for it is not in the natural order of things for one person to have all the virtues. He always has something funny or interesting to recount and yesterday he sent me into hysterics telling me of the march to the bone-yard which was halted, perforce. It seems that last Sunday, Star, one of the Fenway Farm horses, saw fit to pass on, for no other reason than that he was tired of living, and by



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a strange coincidence the Cobb pony drew it's last breath at about the same hour and a man was sent out from town the next day to collect the departed beasts. Dick jumped on the wagon with it's pathetic load, as it was going in the direction that he was taking, expecting to get a lift all the way to Lawton, his destination. But they had scarcely reached the Fair Grounds, about a mile out of town, when what did the only live horse in the party do but fall down in the road, stone dead. I laughed so hard that Dick lost all patience with me and left so I really don't know what they did in their dilemma; Dick didn't think it was particularly funny but I howl and shriek every time I think of it.

I am writing on the veranda and a big brown velvet butterfly with gold splashes on his dusky wings just alighted on the edge of the hammock and balanced there a few seconds, as light as thistle-down. To me, a butterfly, more than anything else on earth, symbolizes hope and fulfillment, for the miserable, homely grub means faith, so strong and steadfast, apparently, is it's belief in the ultimate relief from temporary bondage and darkness, and sure enough, in due time it emerges from it's dingy prison, the very personification of beauteous freedom.

Loring has written asking me to be one of the chaperones at his fraternity house for Junior week in February. Will I go? O, no, I was sixty my last birthday and I'll stay at home and darn stockings, for what care I for the joys of Junior week with it's fraternity teas and luncheons, plays, coasting and dancing and pretty girls and dandy men and all those entrancing things that take one's breath away to merely think of them. Virginia, dear, I'll be there on the first train and spend the rest of my life making it up to Loring for asking me. Garry and the children can stay with Grandma Burwell for the five days that I'll be away. *Do you think that it is awfully frivolous of me?* Tell me truly. I have decided to have my cream Brussels lace over pale pink liberty satin and have some pale blue chiffon waving in the breezes on it somewhere—doesn't that sound luscious—really good enough to eat, I think. I will wear it the night of the prom.

Norah and I have been making grape jelly until we are literally blue in the face. I've made every known kind this year. Garry says whenever he can't find anything that he is sure it's been boiled down for jelly and I really don't wonder and sometimes think that women are crazy the way



they use up their valuable time, tons of sugar and bushels of fruit to make a few paltry glasses of doubtful jelly—not to mention the dozens of glasses and packages of paraffine that must needs go with it all.

I ran in town for Ethel's veranda tea yesterday in spite of my resolution to go in no more for such things and I had a much better time than I expected. It was most amusing to hear the opinions that some of the Buffalo people have of the Stormfield inhabitants, particularly the "stranded nobility."

"I understand that the people out in your town are most unique and Bohemian," remarked that stilted Inez Whiting, whom I never could endure, "and that they do and say the most absurd things."

"Well, why don't you run out in one of your cars some day?" I suggested, "and see for yourself—it's only an hour's ride," and then I painted a most lurid picture and Ethel and Natalie backed me up in my statements. I said that we all lived in tents, wore togas and ate with chop-sticks but that we breathed real air and while we sometimes ate real food, wild berries constituted our principle diet. I told her that we had no set morals or religion but stole from each other and held open-air meetings on the creek bank and worshipped a sun-god. What do you think of some people, anyway—are they quite insane or merely foolish in the head!

Anyone having a sense of humor as fully developed as you have will appreciate to the full the amusing incident that was the hit of Rosamond's party. She has a green country girl who adores her but who apes everything she does and copies or rather tries to copy all her clothes. Last evening we found Rosamond graciously receiving her guests, looking absolutely regal in sapphire blue velvet with trimmings of cream point de Venise and touches of wonderful Oriental embroidery, the creation being one of the gold bricks hurled by the wealthy aunt. All was serene until time for supper and when Rosamond sent up for Lena to come down to assist, the lady appeared in blue velvet (een), almost the identical shade as Rosamond's but of unmistakable cheapness, garnitured profusely with white cotton lace and a fancy braid, both of which were put on in the very manner that rich aunt's gown was adorned. It was too late to say anything and Lena was all dazzling smiles at the effect she thought she was producing, while we were all convulsed at the sight of the elegant Rosamond in her sapphire gown



## A BIT O' SILENCE

and point de Venise, being followed about by Lena, likewise in sapphire and point de Stormfield, who dispensed plates and napkins in the most self-satisfied manner imaginable.

"Well," announced Bob, when Lena had finally been persuaded that she was no longer needed, "imitation may be sincerest flattery but this is overstepping all bounds and if Rosamond won't tell her tomorrow that we think the place is too much for her, *I* will."

"I should say rather that she was too much for the place," amended Rosamond, "and you needn't fear that I will hesitate to tell her so—I'll break it gently e're the clock strikes noon."

Nancy has just come in from school and is already at the piano, her selection being "My Hero" from the "The Chocolate Soldier," and I want to waltz this minute.

September 15.

It is a soft warm evening, gray and misty after the day's rain. The children are sleeping sweetly in their cribs and Garry seems to have followed their example in his big chair, Miss Barrymore curled in a black fur heap upon his knees.

Patty, Gilbertine and I went to Rachel's in the rain this afternoon but the girls couldn't stay long.

"Parent has invited a large number of suffragettes, together with their husbandettes, out for supper tonight," explained Miss Tennant, "so it is up to little Patty to go home now and make several gallons of salad dressing, and Gilbertine, you have simply got to help me—of course, there's no oil in the house to make it with, but never mind, we will probably stop at your house, Nan, and take all the olive oil and also anything else that looks appetizing—come along, my Mandy!" she ordered, dragging Gilbertine from her comfortable place on the divan and out they went.

"Life is such a big proposition," mused Rachel, as we sat in front of her cheery fire, "that I continually wonder why there is so much of petty routine in it—no matter what big, vital thing comes along, there are three meals to get, beds to make, dishes to be washed and a thousand other things of seeming unimportance, and yet they fill our time."

"That's just it," I said eagerly. "Life is so amazing and so wonderful and so unintelligible to us poor, groping pigmies, that these everyday duties are given to us to keep us sane and human, else we would be overcome by the vast-



ness of it all. They are the balance weights—the necessary leaven in the daily bread of our existence.”

“Maybe so,” assented Rachel, leaning back and gazing into the fire, and I couldn’t help noticing that she kept her hand on the locket which showed faintly through her thin blouse.

“Nancy, dear,” she said suddenly, and sitting up very straight, “did you ever feel absolutely down and out and as though there was no use trying any longer? No, probably not,” she answered for me, “with your well ordered existence and surrounded by those who love you, but that is the way I feel now and I’m almost tempted to give right up and just turn my face to the wall and die.”

“O, no, Rachel dear, not after the good fight you’ve made,” I cried hastily, determined that she should hold out just a little longer, “remember that it’s always darkest before the dawn,” and I squeezed her hand tightly.

“You’re such a comfort, Nancy,” she said bravely, “and you have helped me so much—really I don’t know what I’d do without you—you and my favorite prayer.”

“What is it dear?” I asked and Rachel, her face illumined with a beautiful light and her dark eyes shining, repeated softly Stopford Brooks’ exquisite words; “Help us to faithful always to that which we believe to be true; to be faithful to our principles and our conscience when trial comes; to be faithful to our given word; to keep our promises to men when we might win favor by breaking them; to cling to intellectual as well as to moral truth; to so live among men that they may always know where we stand and to fly our flag in the storm as well as in the calm.”

Dusk was falling as she said the last word and she leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes. She seemed to have sunk into a kind of calm lethargy, and to be in a quiet, peaceful mood,

“That blessed mood,  
In which the burden of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world  
Is lightened.”

No sound disturbed the perfect stillness but the soft rain dropping from the trees outside and Copper’s regular breathing, from his position at his mistress’ feet. I was fascinated



## A BIT O' SILENCE

by a picture in the fire and when I raised my head a few moments later I discovered that Rachel had fallen into a deep slumber, so kissing her gently on the forehead, I stole softly out of the door and homeward through the dripping woods.

September 20.

Before you begin to really read this, Virginia, calm yourself and be prepared to laugh and weep both at once, for I'm going to recount to you a most adorable version of "the sweetest story ever told." I'm so glad that I have to write it instead of tell it to you face to face for you would interrupt every minute and I would never be able to record things as they really happened. I am so happy that I scarcely know how to tell it, anyway, and I shall probably spell half the words wrong for I have just returned from Lotus Cottage where I left it's mistress weeping tears of joy on her *husband's* broad shoulders. "Honest and truly, cross your heart?" you're asking—yes, honest and truly, cross my heart, it's gospel. I went up there this afternoon, hoping against hope to break down Rachel's fortitude and power of will and I succeeded. I began by talking of the foolishness of clinging to an idea and of the idiocy of self-sacrifice, then spoke of dear, tender husbands and soft, clinging baby arms and finally commented on the pitiful shortness of life and the folly of wasting even one tiny portion of it, until Rachel put her head in my lap, burst into a perfect torrent of tears and told me the whole story. As is so often the case and as I had divined in this one, the long, lonely months, the heart-break and the whole tragic separation were the result of a misunderstanding caused by lying and slanderous tongues and brought to this awful pass by Phil's apparent lack of humor and Rachel's fiery temper.

"You see, Nancy," Rachel went on, in a shaking voice, after she had outlined the story, "the thing in itself was nothing—merely a silly lark about changing clothes and personalities but when some one told Phil that I had been seen going into Jack's room, he believed it—believed it, Nancy, and accused me of it—think of that—*accused* me, and he raged and stamped and threatened to kill Jack and take his own life, and oh, what hard words he used."

"That was jealousy, dear," I said, "and there is no real love that has not a large element of jealousy in it—it is one of the primal forces of love and really the root of the whole



## A BIT O' SILENCE

thing; and it's cruel, too, Rachel, cruel as the grave, and relentless."

"It may have had something to do with it," she half assented, gazing at me, thoughtfully, her eyes deepest purple and wet with half-shed tears. Then she resumed her narrative.

"Finally he said he would give me a chance to clear myself but, of course, I wouldn't take it—I felt insulted at the mere suggestion and then I made matters worse by saying some terribly cruel and bitter things to which Philip replied cuttingly and so sarcastically and then, O! Nancy—then I struck him full in the face—*my husband* and as long as I live I can never forget the look in his eyes when I did it." Her breath was coming in quick gasps now and her face was white as death. "Then I dashed out of the house," she went on, "and walked for hours and hours and while I was speeding through the still night, trying to imagine how I was ever going to live again, that little Scotch stanza that you may have noticed on the wall in my room, came to my mind and seemed to be the solution to the problem:

*'When the song's gone out o' your life,  
you can't start another while it's a'  
ringin' in your ears; 'tis best to have  
a bit o' silence, and out o' that, maybe,  
a psalm will come bye and bye.'*

"Yes," I thought "it is the only thing to do—I'll have the "bit o' silence"—I'll go away alone and stay away until I feel sure of myself and until I can forget or at least try to forget Phil's cruel words and all the awful horror of the whole thing." When I returned he was standing just where I had left him and without giving him a chance to speak I told him what I had decided—that the only possible course was for us to separate—to live apart until we had each come to a realization of it all and could ask the other's forgiveness. I told him that I would take Gerald to Aunt Lucia's and leave him there while we were apart, if it was forever—"her hands were clutched tightly and two bright spots glowed in her cheeks as she stopped for breath.

"But why," I asked, taking advantage of the pause, "couldn't you have given yourself the joy and comfort of your baby's companionship through your trial?"



## A BIT O' SILENCE

"O, because that wouldn't have been fair to Phil you know—why should I have had that solace any more than he? That precious child means as much to Phil as to me—*almost*," she added, bursting into tears again. My heart was beating wildly but I knew that words were useless now.

"No, Nancy, there was but one thing to do—to each go away alone and fight it out and pray for love to come back to us, for of course we didn't love each other in the fullest sense if we could do and say what we did. O, Nancy, the shame of it—the baseness of it all!" After a long pause she resumed once more:

"Philip never spoke except to acquiesce to all that I said and I made him promise not to try to find me nor to come until I sent for him myself. I spent the whole night packing and Philip shut himself in the library, and I could hear him walking back and forth, back and forth, until dawn when he came up and put some things in two suit cases and after a few words with Melia and a half hour standing by Gerald's crib, left the house.

"Melia announced that she was coming with me, which surprised me greatly, for she had always had such an admiration for Philip and had been with his mother for years. We took Gerald to Aunt Lucia's in Chicago and I nearly died when I left him. Then we came farther east with Copper and my piano and a few of my favorite books and things and when we reached Buffalo I was so ill that I had to go to a hospital for a few weeks. Melia watched over me day and night and one lovely Indian summer day in November (it was early in October that we parted) when I was almost well again, we came out here for the trolley ride and wandered about in the woods until I saw this place which looked like a veritable haven of rest to my weary mind and body. I learned that Mr. Dieffenbach would rent it, although he thought I was crazy, and we were out here within two weeks. When I left home my plans were vague, but I expected to have to work when my money (a few hundred dollars) gave out, but Aunt Lucia told me when I was in Chicago that day that old Uncle James' will had been found and that I would get a check every month. She promised to let me know if my baby was sick and that was all, for she knew better than to waste time and words trying to divert me from my purpose. It is nearly two years, Nancy—two long centuries, and my precious baby is almost four years old, and the little house in Santa Barbara where we were so



happy is silent and shut. With all my determination however, I see now that I never could have lived through it if it hadn't been for you, Nancy, and Garry and Anne and all the other dear people, for you have kept me alive in very truth. I've had my 'bit of silence' and it's taught me much—I've learned to conquer my awful temper and my stubborn pride and through the agony of loneliness, the longings and the heartaches and the terrible pangs of envy when I saw you all fairly steeped in the devotion of your husbands and your children, I've learned that to live and to love are one."

"But you really did not have your 'bit o' silence' after all" I cried, "O Rachel, how selfish we have been!"

"O, yes I did, indeed I did, I have had too much" she said, "and don't say that you have been selfish, please—rather you have all given me a new desire to live."

"O, Nancy," she went on, I said that I hated him and that I would never forgive him and I thought I meant it, but now I speak the truth when I say that I would willingly crawl on my hands and knees over rocks and stones to see his dear face and touch his dear hands just once."

Even as she said the words, a shadow appeared in the doorway and the next instant *a* man—the man—*her* man was in the room, had her limp form in his arms and was weeping tears of joy on her lovely head. I was about to dash the contents of a milk pitcher over her when she opened her eyes and I slipped in a corner, feeling very much like a gooseberry.

"Philip," she said, when she could speak, "can you forgive me? I love you more than life itself and I have learned its hardest lesson."

"Hush, dear heart," said man, in the most marvelously luscious voice, "it is I who must beg forgiveness and as for loving *you*,—O, Rachel!—" Here Rachel put her slender hand over his mouth and in her tenderest tones said: "Let us never speak of it again, my dearest, from now on we will live—just live, and O, how wonderful that will be!" Then she turned and looked in my direction as though she had just remembered my existence but before she could utter a word I had flown. I am so excited that I cannot even think connectedly and want to hug everybody in sight—here comes the ice-man—guess I'll start on him. I now have the extreme pleasure of breaking the news to Bruce—thank goodness I headed him off.





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## A BIT O' SILENCE

On looking this over I have decided to send it by express, *collect*, for I never could pay the postage.

*P. S.* Melia is here with the baby Gerald and I've persuaded her to keep him here until tomorrow; I don't want anyone, not even their own child, to disturb their wonderful happiness and this is Philip's day—alone.

*N. B.* A little bird tells me that *some one*, with Melia's assistance, gave Phil the tip—three guesses who it was.

September 21.

Just a line before dinner to tell you that all is well. Melia and I took the weeny boy up to the cottage this morning and I stayed just long enough to see Rachel clasp her baby in her arms and weep out all her pent-up motherhood upon his cunning Dutch cropped head. Aunt Lucia had evidently seen to it that he didn't forget his mother but most of his attention was given to a large gray elephant from which he is never parted.

He was so precious last night, and good as gold and although he seemed to enjoy the Van Clief assortment of books and toys, he kept his elephant close at hand. 'You're to sleep here Darling' I said, indicating Philip's brass crib. "Is there room for my 'effulent'?" he asked, measuring it carefully with his eye, "cause Jimsey always sleeps wif me, you know."

I know you will scold me soundly for not telling you of my plan but I was so afraid that it might fall through that I said nothing, even to Garry, and then I'm rather leery of the written word, anyway, for letters do go astray. Why, my dear, Melia told me that Philip has been on a Texas ranch every minute of the time and not a week has passed but what she has heard from him and written him of Rachel, through the medium of her sister's letters; also that "Uncle James'" checks came indirectly from Philip, who had reached Aunt Lucia's several hours before Rachel and made his plans. He also made Melia promise not to leave Rachel for a day and to take good care of her every minute. Philip is wonderful—tall and dark, and his mouth is a close second to Garry's. He showed me an adorable picture of Rachel at 17—when he met her, that he always carries in his pocket. I am so glad that he was man enough to break his promise when it was for the love of the one woman. I never could comprehend the kind of love that put honor and duty and the given word before it—the kind that places the possession of the one beloved creature before all other things and per-



## A BIT O' SILENCE

sons, duty or reason, is the only kind I understand or want.

But you see, Virginia, things had reached such a pass that something had to be done and although I wasn't at all sure that I could accomplish my purpose, I took Lady Macbeth's advice, and did not fail. I simply made Melia give me Philip's address, by assuring her that Rachel's courage was dwindling fast and then I wrote to him that the time was ripe for his return and that Rachel's heart was breaking but that she would never give up, I feared, if she died holding to her resolve, and I implored him to put all his pride aside, get little Gerald, and come to her. I gave him minute directions and told him to arrange to get here this particular Saturday afternoon and Melia would meet him at the train and take the baby to our house. And it all worked out so beautifully! O, Virginia, what if it hadn't? But there I go again—it was meant to work out right, and so it did, of course. Rachel probably will never know and if she does she will thank me and truly I had to do it for it was a direct inspiration from Heaven and could not be turned aside. While I was there this morning I substituted the sprig of rosemary that you sent me, for the lotus blossom. *Comprenez-vous?*

October 2.

A perfect morning, Virginia, soft and mild and bright; the trees look like liveried sentinels in their scarlet and gold and the October sky is a vast blue dome stretching into interminable space above them.

Rachel, Philip and the darling baby child left yesterday for their home, Melia having gone on last week, with Copper, to get it ready. We all went down to the station to see them off and everybody wept over everybody else, while we nearly squeezed Rachel to pieces, wrung Philip's hand into a dislocation and fairly devoured the weeny one; he's the perfect image of Rachel and as cunning as a healthy, four-year old boy naturally would be. Anne's parting gift was an exquisite basket of delicious fruit while Dick presented Rachel with four of the latest novels and Gilbertine brought a large box of her wonderful candy. The rest of us loaded her down with flowers, Stormfield's greenhouses having been stripped for the occasion.

"If it weren't for the presence of the youngster we might hurl rice and old shoes," suggested Burce, "and give them a decent send off, but as 'tis 'taint'".



## A BIT O' SILENCE

"Hardly," said Rosamond, "unless we conceal the child and send him by express on a later train. Really, girls," she added, "it's a crime to let that adorable Philip go from our midst—couldn't we contrive to keep him here somehow? Rachel, darling, can't we induce you to stay here—we might be able to part from you but it seems well nigh impossible to let husband depart in peace."

Rachel glanced at her Philip with a radiant smile, and then looked back at us: "O, I wish that we might stay," she said eagerly, "but Phil has to return to the ranch for a short time and then we must get back to our own home and I'm afraid that I couldn't spare him for a day—not even to you dear creatures." And again her eyes unconsciously sought her husband's fine, strong face, and rested there. They have arranged to buy the cottage and are going to try to spend a part of every year in the dear hut in the forest, but *together*, always, forever, after this.

Rachel gave me the keys and has asked me to go up and see that all is in condition for the winter, if it isn't too much trouble. As if anything that one could do for Rachel would be trouble. Just before the train pulled in, Rachel came to me and drew me close to her.

"Dear," she whispered, in her low, sweet, velvety voice, "I won't even try to thank you for all your wonderful kindness to me, nor will I attempt to tell you how happy I am, but I want you to know that I feel that I owe it all to you, for without your love and encouragement I never would have lived to experience this perfect joy." And she squeezed my hand in a manner that spoke volumes. Here she was set upon by the rest of the colony who were lined up waiting for their turn and then Philip came up and took my hand in both of his.

"Nancy," he said, "if we ever have a daughter we will name her after you and a greater appreciation of what you have done for me I could not show, for we once had a mule named Nancy and she kicked me over the pasture fence and I've always hated the name since. But, seriously," he added, "you're a trump and if there were words to tell you how grateful I am to you for bringing us together, I would say them, but as there are not, I will merely say God bless you, dear, and yours, always and everywhere."

"Hush," I said, "I'm a little interfering busybody and I don't deserve a word of praise—it just all did itself"—but my heart was bursting with thankfulness and my looks be-



lied my words, I knew. The whistle blew, the train began to move slowly and they were gone. But not out of our lives, however, for Rachel is not one of the "ships that pass in the night," but a staunch and sturdy craft of friendship that, with a cargo of love and bravery, has anchored herself forever in the harbor of our hearts.

The children have just come in from Sunday school and Norah is calling us to dinner after which we are going to walk up to the cottage which is not Lotus any more but Rosemary, for remembrance.

*Evening.*—Rachel might have expressed her appreciation of all that we did (which was nothing) in a thousand different ways, I suppose, but certainly she could not have done so in a more substantial way, I'm sure. We went up to the cottage to see that it was all right and tied to the leg of the beautiful piano was a card bearing these words; "To Nancy Vancief, 2d, from Rachel, who loves her." I sat right down and cried for joy while Nancy danced up and down in her delight. "My own perana," she kept saying, "my own perana, my very own."

"Well, that is a gift, indeed," I said to Garry as we gazed at the beautiful thing, for Rachel's piano was a part of her very self, Virginia, the joy of her soul.

On the way home Garry broke the news gently that he has landed that position in Kansas City that he has been wanting for so long and he is so pleased about it. I discovered tears trickling down my cheeks and Garry stopped in amazement. "But just think what it means to me, financially and every other way!" "Yes, but think what it means to me," I said, "leaving Stormfield and all these dear people—what will I ever do without them?" He remarked that I was not very complimentary to my husband and has promised that we can spend our summers here. I was ashamed of my tears, for of course I'd gladly go to the Sandwich Islands this minute with Garry if he had to go. I've never had any patience with the sort of girl who makes life miserable for her husband when he is obliged to take her away from her home town and her mother. I think the most beautiful part of the most beautiful marriage service is where it says: "And forsaking all others, cleave thee only unto him, as long as ye both shall live." And I'll cleave to Garry as long as I live and thank the kind Lord for giving me such a husband to cleave to. Rachel isn't here now, of course, but it *will* be hard to leave the others. Anne, with her great big heart and



## A BIT O' SILENCE

wonderful personality, Rosamond, with her breeziness, Kate with her courage and her cleverness, Esther, with her wit and steadfastness, Roberta, with her charm and culture, Dora, with her common sense and her babies, dear Gilbertine and Patty and the dear "old residents," all the nice men and the precious children and the cats and the dogs and Anne's poll-parrot and the lovely trees and the Concord Hills and—O, everything that I love about the place.

We will give a large fare-well party and give them all a standing invitation to visit us on every possible occasion. I am more than grateful for the gift of these months in their midst and will always think of them with love and tenderness and hope unceasingly, "May the Lord bless them and keep them; the Lord make His face to shine upon them; the Lord lift up his countenance upon them and give them peace."

*Large N. B.* As I live and breathe, Bruce is passing the house this minute with Gilbertine. O, joy! O, rap-ture! Bully for you Bruce! Good Luck!

THE END.



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